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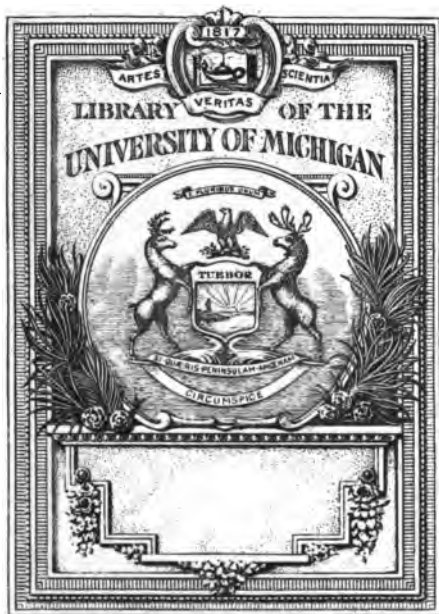
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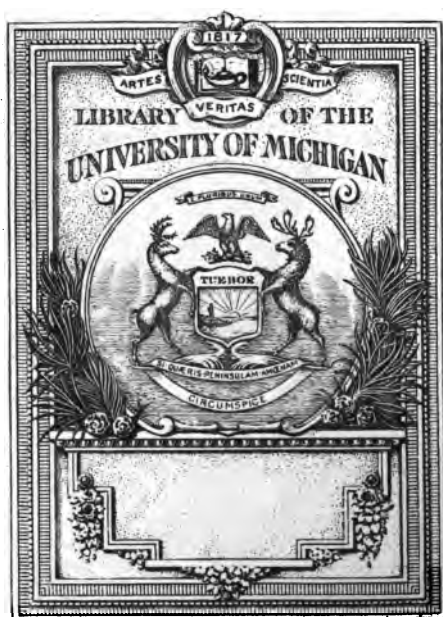
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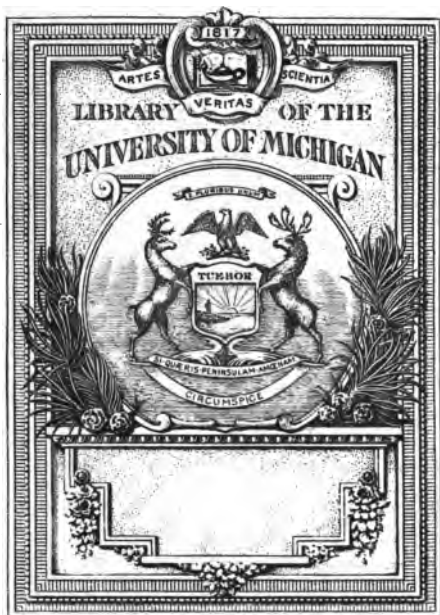
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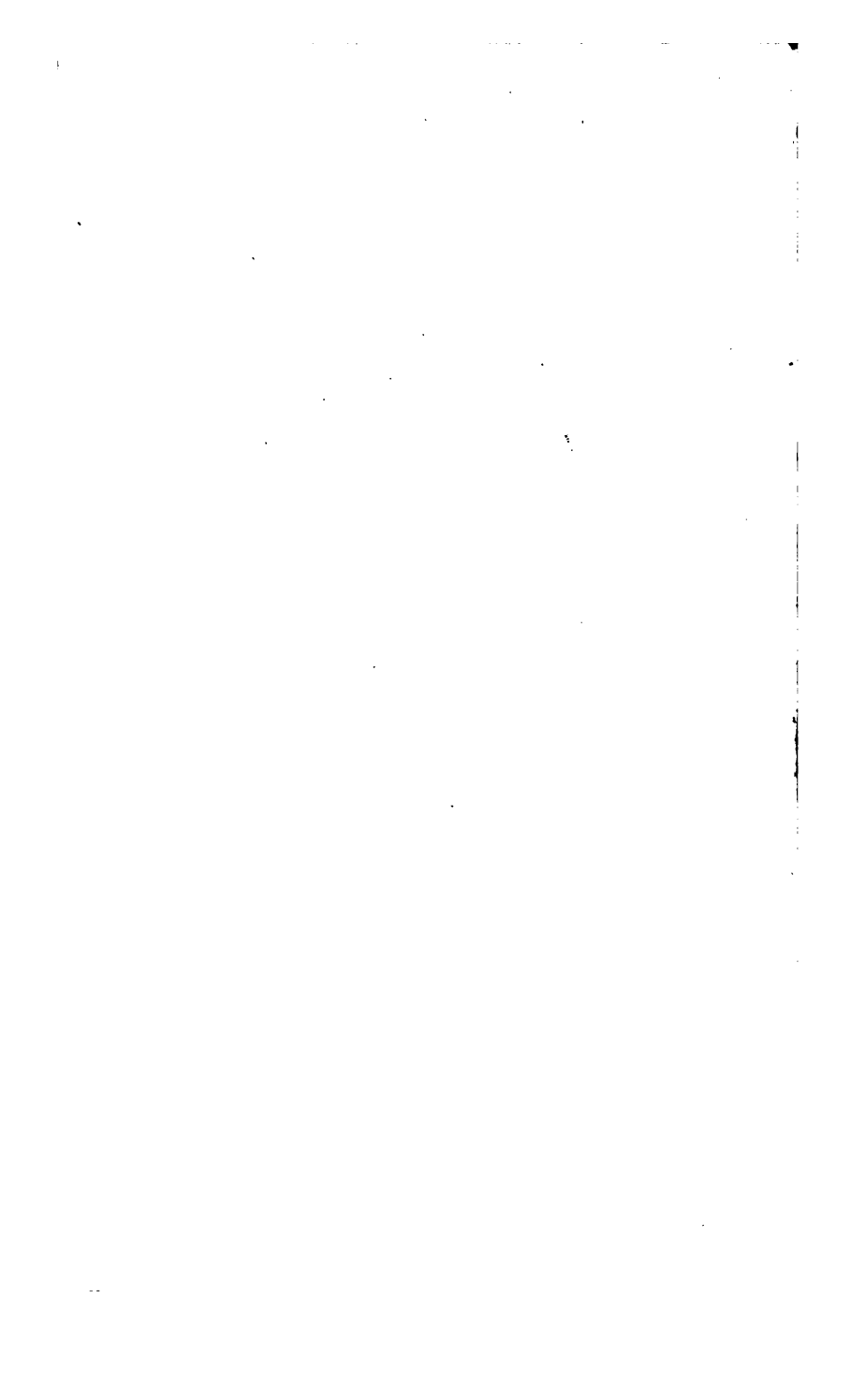


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3 vols



Galt, John

THE
EARTHQUAKE;

▲
TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE AYRSHIRE LEGATEES."

A voice in the heavens—a sound in the earth—
And omens and prodigies herald the birth;—
But the deeds that shall be to the sins that were done,
Are darker than shadows to forms in the sun.

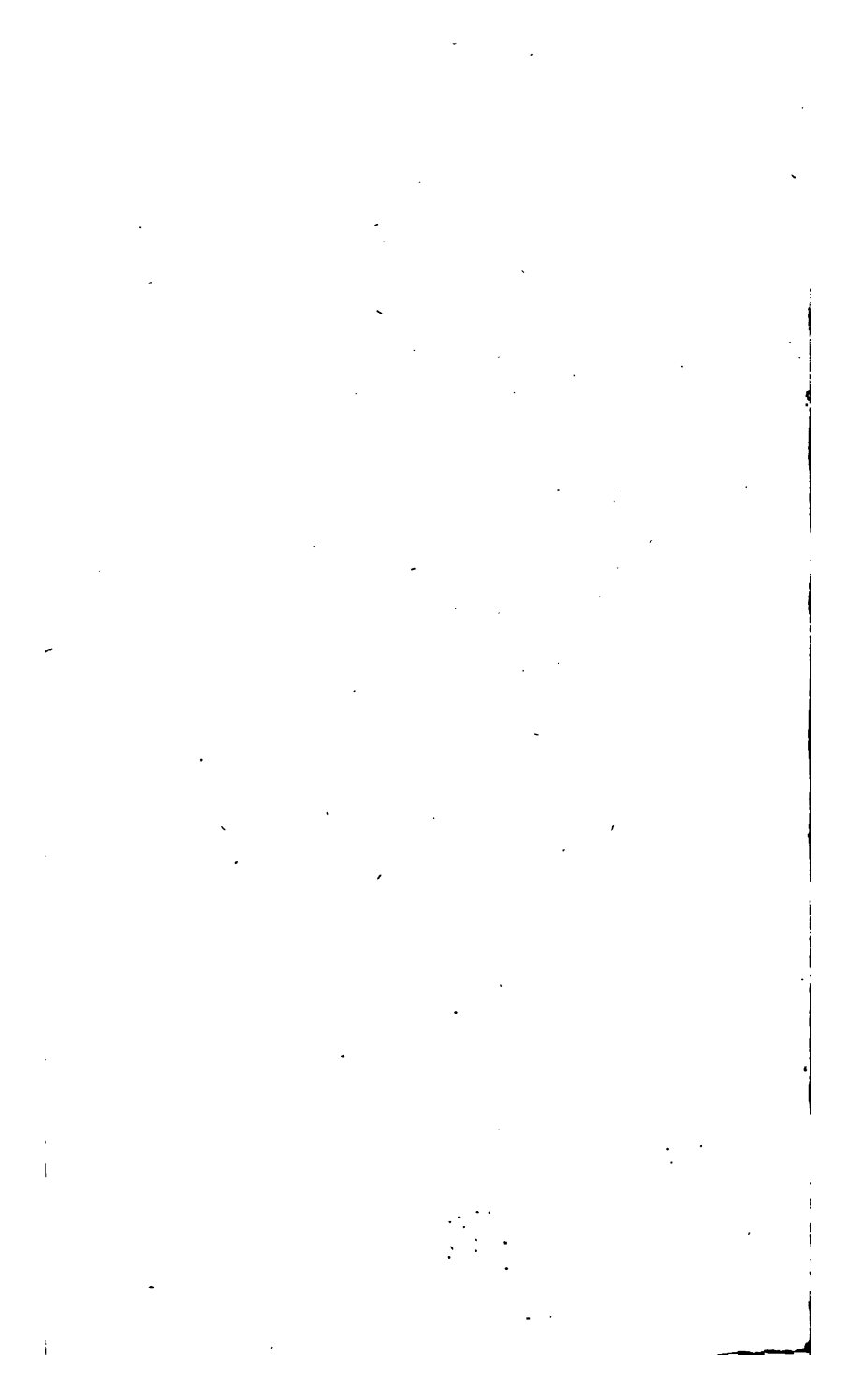
IN THREE VOLUMES.

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RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL OF GUILFORD,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

I HAVE presumed to inscribe these sketches of scenes, and characters abroad, to your Lordship, as a humble mark of my respect, and because I know no traveller who can better appreciate the authenticity of the materials which have furnished the descriptions ; your Lordship having visited the greater number of the places where the transactions are supposed to have happened. I have the honour to be,

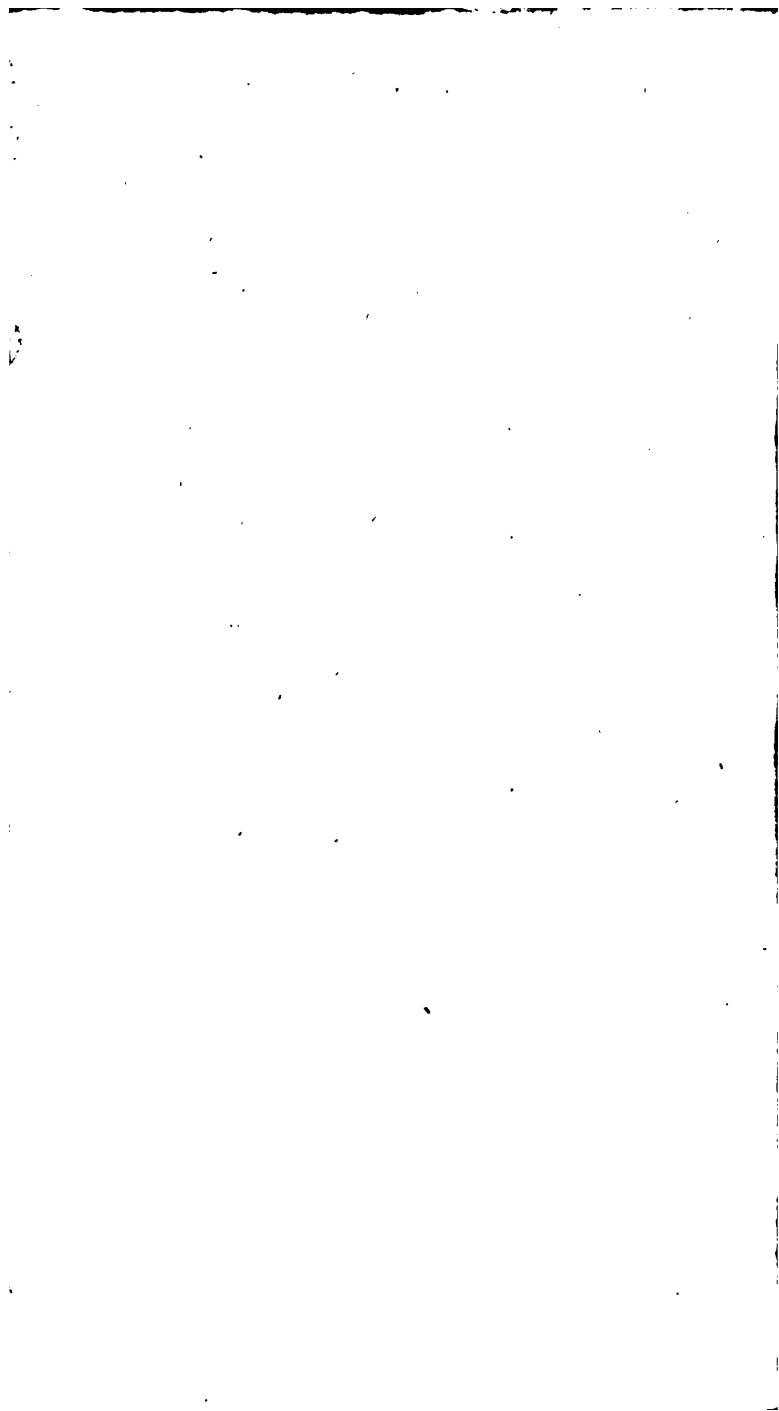
MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

7-18-49 2438



THE
EARTHQUAKE.

CHAPTER I.

Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
From all affection, and from all contempt.

BYRON.

IN the evening of the day on which the city of Messina was destroyed by an earthquake, the magistrates met in the cathedral, one of the few edifices which had withstood the convulsion, to adopt such measures as circumstances so calamitous rendered indispensable. They were seated within the railing of the high altar; and the convicts, of whom a vast number were employed on the public works, and who were at this time objects of the first attention and greatest dread, stood in rows in

their fetters on the steps. A multitude of women and children, who had lost their husbands and parents beneath the ruins of the houses, filled the body of the church. The lamps in the side chapels were lighted, but they only served to increase the solemnity of a scene where darkness and confusion, guilt and grief were mingled tumultuously together.

As the records of the tribunals, with all other archives of the city, lay buried beneath the ruins of the senate house, the Baron Alcamo proposed that the convicts who were known to have been longest under punishment, should be set at liberty. We shall not enter into any account of the Baron's argument, for he was, in his own opinion, a philosopher, and of course sufficiently long-winded for the occasion; nor can we say whether he convinced his colleagues of the expediency of what he suggested, or whether they were induced to adopt it in order to get rid of his dissertations on the distinctive qualities of vice and crime; certain, however it is, they did re-

solve that the irons of several of the criminals should be struck off, and it was done on the spot.

Some of the convicts, on finding themselves again free, fell on their knees and loudly expressed their thankfulness, others sullenly retired, and a few bowed respectfully to the magistrates, and walked away with the erectness of virtuous resolution firmly expressed in their demeanour. But one man particularly attracted the notice of the philosophical Baron, not only by the gentlemanly air of his look, but the abstraction with which he allowed his shackles to be removed, and the disconsolate indifference with which he sank into the crowd.

"I have often," said Francisco, the Baron's nephew, a young man, who was sitting behind him, "observed that fellow on the Marina. He is a strange compound of opposite qualities. I have seen him at times toiling with rage at his task, as if he would break away from the horror of his state, but more frequently under the influence of happier feelings. When the other

felons lay stretched at noon asleep in the shadow of the buildings, he has sat in the sunshine, and carolled with the gaiety of a bird in freedom, merrily rattling his chains as an accompaniment to his song. At other times, I have discovered him weeping bitterly. None of the present police officers know any thing of his history, for he was a convict before the last pestilence, of which all their predecessors died. But they call him Don Birbone, and they all treat him with marked respect. His language is pure and elegant, and he speaks to those about him with the condescension of a person accustomed to good society. You could not but observe the smallness and neatness of his ears and hands, the physical indications of a mind disposed to respect the feelings of others, but the glossy smoothness of his skin shows that he is a constitutional voluptuary."

The Baron listened with unusual attention to Francisco. His curiosity was roused by the personal remarks on Don Birbone, and while he thought them some-

what philosophical, he was the more surprised, as he had never given his nephew credit either for talent or sagacity. It was certainly not much to the Baron's honour, as a magistrate, to pay any attention at that time to such observations. But gentlemen of philosophical habits are apt to forget the proprieties of time and place, and the Baron was particularly liable to do so. His imagination was awakened by the observations of Francisco, and they acted on him with the influence of a spell. He became restless and uneasy; and at length, being incapable of taking any further interest in the proceedings of that memorable evening, he rose and left the church, followed by his nephew.

It was a beautiful night—not a flake of cloud was on the sky, and the moon shone with unusual splendour. There was a sensible tranquillity in the heavens, the more impressive as it was awfully contrasted with the murmurs of the desolated city, and the occasional crash of some fractured edifice which the earthquake rent to

the foundations, but had not at the time thrown down.

The Baron and Francisco, after making their way through the crowd in the porch of the church, looked at the masses of ruin which lay in every direction around, and then, without speaking, descended the steps; but they had not advanced above twenty paces till they saw Don Birbone sitting alone, apparently absorbed in thought. On going towards him, they overheard him utter a few emphatic sentences, and different motives deterred them from interrupting his soliloquy. The old gentleman was curious to hear what he said, and his nephew to observe the changes of the convict's expressive countenance as he gazed alternately on the heavens, and looked at his hands and naked feet.

"It is my destiny!" exclaimed Don Birbone, unconscious of being overheard. "It is my fate! something more is required of me than I have yet done—than I have yet suffered, and I shall not die of hunger, although starving; no: although I have not yet learnt to beg."

The Baron, in spite of philosophy, was a humane, good natured old man, and could not withstand the impatient exclamations of the outcast.

“What can you do, poor fellow?” said he, advancing towards him, with much kindness in his accent.

Don Birbone rose, and looked at the Baron, “What can I do? mischief!” was the stern reply.

“But what are you fit for?” enquired the benevolent philosopher.

“Nothing, nothing,” answered the outcast, and turned to go away.

The Baron’s heart was melted, and he hung his head in sorrow.

“What are you?” said Francisco, addressing himself briskly to the convict.

Don Birbone hastily looked back, and, with some degree of indignation, said, “Do you not see what I am?”

“But what have you been?” interrupted the old gentleman, with all his curiosity alert. “What have you been?”

The outcast paused, and looking Francisco steadily in the face, said, with much

emphasis, "I was a man whom nature intended to make happy, but fortune has made most wretched. My heart and passions have been ever at war. My will and inclinations have been constantly at variance, and the latter has always prevailed. My soul is the slave of my sensuality. I am one of those who are convinced, by the feelings of their own bosoms, that they are doomed to perdition."

The Baron listened to this rhapsody with sage-like equanimity, for he had been uniformly of opinion that man is a compound being, a pure intelligence in mind, a gross animal in body, and it seemed to him that Don Birbone had very just and beautiful notions with respect to the difference between moral and physical life.

Francisco shrank from the piercing eye of the outcast, and taking his uncle by the arm, said, "Let us go home, it is late, and my aunt and sister, after the terrors of this terrible day, stand much in need of company and consolation."

The Baron tacitly assented, and giving

the outcast a dollar, requested him to call at his house in the morning, when he would see what could be done for him.

Don Birbone took the money, and, without returning thanks, walked quickly on a few paces, but in a moment recollecting himself, he turned round, and silently bowed to the Baron.

“What a noble spirit has been mortified by the degradation of that man,” exclaimed the old gentleman, as he took hold of his nephew’s arm. “He may yet become an ornament to the world if we can reinstate him in his own good opinion, which, with the help of the blessed Virgin, I will endeavour to do.”

“I am afraid,” replied Francisco, “that your endeavour will be in vain. The man, notwithstanding what he says, is a natural criminal. He thinks only of himself; he feels but for himself; and he is so accustomed to indulge himself, that he has contrived reasons and motives for doing ill, by persuading himself that he is predestinated to perdition.”

“ You are a fool, and not fit to be spoken to!” cried the Baron peevishly, and he swung his nephew’s arm angrily away: “ You are a fool, and you know nothing of human nature ; indeed, how should you—a boy, an impertinent boy.”

By this time they had reached the portal of their residence, and the Baron in his anger, bruised his thumb as he plied the knocker for admission, an occurrence which did not tend to restore the philosophical amenity of his temper.

CHAPTER II.

They seem'd even then—that twain—unto the last
To half forget the present in the past ;
To share between themselves some separate fate,
Whose darkness none besides should penetrate.

BYRON.

AMONG other noble mansions, in which the possessors were buried beneath their ruins, was the palace of Count Corneli. It had been a stately and extensive pile, constructed with much architectural ornament, and furnished with the costliest productions of the arts and genius of France and Italy. The Count himself was considered the most accomplished man in Messina, but a veil of mystery hung over him, and while he was universally admired for his attainments, every one, admitted to his society, was struck

with something in his manner, which could not be easily described. It was not that kind of reserve which invests many men of the greatest talents in general company, nor that undefinable effect of superior minds, which the weak or vulgar never understand; but an instability which can be compared only to an unequal temper. In the most cheerful and disengaged moments of conversational ease, he would often suddenly fall silent, even in the middle of a sentence, and his countenance become overcast; at other times, when listening apparently with perfect attention to any of his visitors, he would abruptly begin another topic, which perhaps was only connected with what he had been hearing by the slight association of a single word.

He had married early in life a sister of the Baron Alcamo, and lived with her at Palermo. In due time after their marriage, she presented him with a son, but she herself, it was commonly understood, had been seized with madness at the birth, and after all the skill of the capital had been tried in

vain, she was sent to a convent, where she soon after died. There were, at one time, unpleasant reports respecting an accident that she had met with in being conveyed to the convent, in consequence of escaping, as it was said, from the person who had charge of her, but the particulars were never well known; for her relations, if they knew more than the public, preserved a profound silence on the subject. After her death, the Count, although before that lamentable event, one of the gayest men in the metropolis, withdrew from all society, and travelled over the greatest part of Europe, in quest of that happiness which he had lost, or forfeited. If however he could not find peace of mind, he acquired a rich variety of knowledge, and when he chose to exert himself, few men excelled him in the justness of his political reflections, or in the correctness of his taste in whatever was interesting, with regard to the arts or literature of the different countries which he had visited. Such was the common report regarding him.

About a year before the earthquake he came to reside at Messina, his native town, where at first he entertained a great deal of company and visited frankly, as if resolved at last to overcome that melancholy, which for more than eighteen years had oppressed his faculties, and obscured the natural splendour of his endowments. But one day, as he was walking on the Marina, he started at the sight of some person whom he observed in a knot of people round a mountebank, and returned suddenly home. From that hour he never stirred abroad, and the vulgar report was, that he had been blighted by the glimpse of an evil eye; a thousand vague and foolish stories were indeed spread concerning this incident, and which had the effect of rendering him an object of great interest to the multitude, so much so, that when it was known he was alive beneath the broken arches and fallen columns of his mansion, a vast assemblage of persons collected from all parts of the city round the spot, in the expectation of seeing something very extraordinary take place.

Father Anselmo, a Benedictine friar, who justly merited the perpetual gratitude of the city, for the zeal with which he assisted the inhabitants to superintend a band of labourers appointed by the magistrates to dig out those who were discovered to be alive in the ruins, on hearing that Count Corneli was in this situation, hastened to his assistance. It happened as he and his attendants passed along, that Don Birbone was standing at a small huxtry booth, greedily eating a morsel of bread which the charity of Baron Alcamo had enabled him to purchase; the convict, struck with the haste of the people, enquired of the friar where they were going so fast, and on being told to dig out Count Corneli, who was alive under the ruins of his palace, the bread dropped from the convict's hand, and he exclaimed, in a tone of exultation almost terrible, "Corneli alive and in Messina!" The crowd hurried on, and he joined them.

Father Anselmo, on reaching the spot, having ascertained where the Count was,

instructed the labourers to proceed cautiously lest the fragments which hung loosely together should fall and crush them; but Don Birbone, heedless of his admonition, seized a pickaxe, and began to dig and plunge it into the mingled wreck of marbles and furniture. In vain did Anselmo entreat him to desist, till the superincumbent mass, undermined by his exertions, began to shake, and falling down with a hideous crash and hurl, almost suffocated him with dust; but he had given liberty to the Count, and springing forward on obtaining the first glimpse of his person, drew him out into the air.

A glance of mutual recognition took place instantly between them; the convict appeared triumphant, but the Count seemed abashed and terrified; the people ascribed the exultation of Don Birbone to his success, and the pale and abject looks of the nobleman to the dreadful imprisonment from which he had been released.

In the course of a few minutes, however, the Count recovered his wonted self pos-

session, and assuming the habitual dignity of his deportment, cordially recommended Don Birbone to the care of Father Anselmo, assuring him, at the same time, that he might freely claim to participate in his fortune. The crowd who heard this, and for whom it was intended, applauded the just generosity of Corneli; but the audacious felon smiled at the expression, and gave the Count a look so significant, that he was a second time abashed and subdued to the most abject timidity.

The Friar, who had not attended to what passed, informed Corneli that the house of his friend the Baron Alcamo had withstood the shock of the earthquake, advising him to retire there for the night; the Count, without speaking, moved to go away, and the convict indicated by his manner an intention to accompany him, but the former, in evident alarm, abruptly requested him to remain with the Friar, till he could make some arrangement for suitably rewarding his services. Don Birbone paused for a moment and placed his finger on his lip, as if

reflecting on what he ought to do, and Cornéli hesitated awaiting his decision. The convict looked at him askance, and observing his uncertainty, bowed, apparently with much humility, and thanking him for his goodness in setting so high a value on his service, respectfully wished him good night.

The Count bowed in return and walked away in silence, with despondency so visibly depicted in his countenance, that the crowd were touched with a sentiment of awe for which none of them could account.

When he reached the residence of the Baron, he found the old gentleman and his nephew in a pertinacious conversation respecting Don Birbone, and which they scarcely suspended to give him welcome, or to congratulate him on his deliverance.

The Baron was decidedly of opinion that the convict was an unfortunate man of rank, whom the malice of fortune, or the treachery of friends, had driven into some rash act of criminal indiscretion; and Francisco was no less persuaded, that he was only one of those adventurers of low origin, who are led by peculiar endowments of mind

and person, to acquire tastes and habits above their condition, and seduced into a life of expedients, sink step by step into a course of crimes. "Such men," said Francisco, "even in the greatest depravity, retain a keen sense of remorse, but the strength of their passions, and the flexibility which habits of deceit and artifice give to their principles, render them infinitively more dangerous to society than delinquents of less qualified wickedness."

It was at this point of their argument, that the Count entered. Francisco was much struck with his wan and troubled countenance, and eyed him inquisitively, but said nothing. The Baron, after hastily enquiring how he had escaped from the fall of his house, without waiting for a reply, told him with much self satisfaction, that he had procured the emancipation of several of the convicts, and described Don Birbone with enthusiasm.

Francisco, during the time that his uncle was speaking, kept his eye steadily fixed on the Count, and when he had finished, said, "I think, my lord, that you have known this

Don Birbone?" A gleam of alarm wavered over the visage of Corneli, but in a moment he was again master of himself, and answered negligently, "I dare say it is the same person to whom I am indebted for my deliverance from the ruins."

"Why then do you dread him?" enquired Francisco; but before the Count had time to answer, the door was thrown open, and Father Anselmo with Don Birbone entered.

Corneli was startled; but when the convict approached him with an air of respectful deference, he recovered himself, and again thanked him for the service which he had rendered him, with so much warmth, that Francisco thought he was anxious to remove some doubt of his sincerity, and said, seemingly unconscious of the force of his words, "Do not be afraid of him, my lord."

Don Birbone looked at the ingenuous countenance of the young man with such amazement in his features, that it might have been mistaken for terror, had it not

been instantly sicklied over with the pale cast of thought. Francisco blushed as if he had committed some gross impropriety, and immediately retired to another part of the room. A short general conversation then took place between the rest of the party, and when Don Birbone and the friar moved to go away, the Baron, in total forgetfulness of the character of the former, invited them to supper that evening. The Count was thunderstruck, and seemed at a loss to divine the motives of the old gentleman. Francisco was also surprised, but more indignant than surprised, at what he conceived to be a philosophical folly in his uncle; and after the two strangers had retired he fell into a reverie, wondering why they should have come at such a time of night, and apparently without any definite motive.

CHAPTER III.

The old
And crazy earth has had her shaking fits.
—COWPER.

DREADFUL as the convulsion was which, in the course of less than half a minute, shook the splendid city of Messina into fragments, and buried thousands of the inhabitants beneath the ruins, the silent horrors of the scene next morning were, to the humane heart, still more appalling. During the earthquake the cries and distraction of the people were overwhelmed in the thunder of the falling edifices, and the roaring of the sea that fled and returned with a furious violence. The presence of the destroying angel was veiled in the clouds of dust which filled the mid-day air with suffocating darkness. It was only by looking at the print of his

steps when the clouds had rolled away, that the terrors of his might and wrath could be duly appreciated.

Francisco rose at day-break with the intention of ascertaining what had been the fate of his different acquaintances, and particularly of a young man of the name of Salvator Patrano, his most intimate companion, who lived in a distant quarter of the town. But the streets were choked with rubbish, and the face of every object so changed that he lost his way, and, after wandering about for some time, he burst into tears at finding himself a bewildered stranger in his native city.

He had passed churches which the people dreaded to enter, for the vaulted roofs were riven asunder, and the pillars that supported them overhung their pedestals in the very act of falling. In one he saw the body of the officiating priest crushed beneath the statue of a saint that had been cast down from its niche while he was elevating the host at the altar. In others, where the people crowded during the con-

vulsion, and from which, while the walls were splitting, they had as madly attempted to escape, he witnessed the most frightful spectacles of the dead and living, so locked and grasped, and kneaded, as it were, into masses together, that in many instances the persons employed in separating them were obliged, to cut the dead bodies to pieces, before they could get the survivors extricated. But of all these terrible sights none affected him more deeply than the scene around the corpse of an old man, which his family seemed to have been depositing in a cadaver at the very moment when the city was shaken asunder. The roof had fallen in upon them as they were bringing the bier into the middle of the charnel-house, and all the mourners were killed on the spot; while the body remained uninjured; and the different skeletons stood around unmoved and entire, except one, which a little boy belonging to the funeral had convulsively seized by the leg and drawn across the heap of ruins which had crushed himself to death.

In several places he passed knots of little

children, sitting with their heads together, crying for their parents, and shivering with hunger. In others, he saw helpless old men who had lost their all and survived all their friends. When he first found himself at a loss to know his way, he enquired of a lady who was sitting gaily dressed at a window, and, as she did not answer, he thought she had not heard: he spoke to her again, and she looked at him. He addressed her a third time, but she only glared wildly, and raising her hands, shook them fearfully, and, turning her head away, made no reply.

In many instances the sufferers were struck with a permanent consternation still more distressing, and he passed an old woman who was dandling the mangled body of her grand-child, and bestowing on it all the epithets of endearment. He stopped, fascinated by the perfection of her misery, and she noticed him. In the same moment, an afflicting ray of reason seemed to dart across her mind, and, glancing a terrified look at the corpse to which she was singing

so fondly, she dashed it from her with a scream of horror and disgust, hiding her face in her hands against the refted walls of her roofless house. Francisco himself ran from the spot, but he was soon stopped by a crowd round a crazed paralytic friar, whom the police patrol were dragging to prison. He had been discovered in the act of robbing a church of the relics of a martyr, celebrated for their miraculous efficacy. They had been inclosed in a golden casket, which the priests belonging to the church accused him of attempting to steal, as he had burst it open; but it was only the sacred bones that he wanted, and he held them still in his hand.

The emotion arising from so many successive scenes of madness and affliction became insupportable to Francisco, and he sat down on the steps of a mansion, the walls of which had fallen inwards, with a weariness of heart as depressaing as the fatigue of a long journey, and soon after a young man came to him and addressed him by name; he looked up, but did not know

the stranger, who, much affected, took him by the hand, and said, " Good Heavens, my dear Franciso, do you not know me ?" It was his friend and daily associate Salvator Patrano. Francisco instantly rose and embraced him, and enquired with tears what he had suffered to occasion so great a change in his appearance. The other however told him, that his own looks were also so altered from what they had been but the day before, that had he not seen him from a distance he should not have known him.— These mournful changes were much observed after the earthquake, and were among some of its most striking effects, as if the horror of the shock had deranged the very physical frame of the inhabitants.

Francisco, in walking from the place where he had been sitting, told Salvator what had happened regarding Don Birbone, and the indiscribable intelligence which seemed to exist between him and Count Corneli. At any other time Salvator would have ridiculed his notions respecting this mysterious sympathy, for he considered Fran-

cisco liable to indulge a superstitious disposition; but the terrible spectacles, every where around, filled him with awe, and he listened to him attentively, but did not reply.

As they proceeded towards the Marina to view the havoc there, they were stopped by a crowd assembled round the ruins of a convent, in which many of the sisterhood had perished. Among the persons most active in assisting to extricate the survivors, Francisco saw Don Birbone, and pointed him out to his friend as he came from the portal, bearing in his arms one of the nuns, who had been severely bruised. In coming forward with his burden, the convict stumbled on the rubbish, and the nun being in consequence painfully shaken, uttered a feeble ejaculation to the Holy Virgin. Don Birbone, in the same instant, paused and looked earnestly into her pale and emaciated face, and both Francisco and Salvator were struck with the conflict of feelings which his own countenance immediately manifested. He however soon subdued his agitation, and

carrying the nun gently to a short distance from the gate, laid her softly down, and requesting Father Anselmo, who was standing near the spot, to pay her some attention, immediately disappeared among the spectators.

There was something so remarkable in this little scene, that the two friends felt themselves involuntarily constrained to take a part in it, and accordingly, as soon as the convict left the nun, they went towards her. Francisco tendered her his best assistance, but instead of making him any answer she turned her eyes languidly on him, and gazed intently in his face, while he at the same time experienced an indistinct reminiscence of having seen her before. In this however he was mistaken, for while he was bending over her as she lay on the ground, one of the menials of the convent came to speak with the Friar; and Salvator, addressing himself to her, learnt that the unfortunate sister had only the evening before the earthquake come from the city of Sciacca, where she had been many years in a convent.

In consequence of this information, the friends thought it would be impertinent to obtrude themselves any longer on her attention, and they accordingly walked away, Father Anselmo and the servant having assured them that she should be speedily carried to a place of safety and refuge.

CHAPTER IV.

Pish ! these moral mysteries are incredulous.

WEBSTER AND ROWLEY.

FRANCISCO was in the twenty-second year of his age, and different opinions were entertained of him among his friends and acquaintance. He had certainly made no great proficiency in his studies at school, for he was tall and of quick growth, and it has been remarked, that boys of that description are seldom apt scholars. But he was early distinguished for a singular acuteness of tact, and comprehended what passed in the minds of those with whom he conversed so instantaneously, that his discernment often excited the greatest surprise. In his disposition he was simple and ingenuous, but tinged with enthusiasm ; and having no reservation in his reflections, notions and expressions escaped him, often exceedingly

provoking to those whom he addressed ; but occasionally he made observations so philosophical and profound, that even wiser men than the Baron Alcamo, his uncle, were astonished, and puzzled to reconcile these shining intervals of genius with the inconsiderate weaknesses which rendered his general behaviour unsatisfactory.

In his person he was, as I have already intimated, above the ordinary stature, and he stooped in his gait, but it was with that peculiar inflection of the body which indicates thoughtfulness. For, at times he would erect himself with an air of surprising dignity, which showed that his habitual inclination to look upon the ground was not the effect of weakness or deformity. His complexion was a pale olive ; his features were prominent and strikingly expressive ; his teeth bright and well set, and his eyes were uncommonly small, and more remarkable for a peering inquisitive cast, than either for beauty or brilliancy. In a word, it was impossible to see this young man in the streets without being struck with his

appearance; for there was a thoughtful absent air about him, that might have been mistaken for silliness, while there were also a degree of character and intellect in his sudden looks, that bespoke interest and respect.

His education had not been well conducted, and his talents consequently had not been fairly developed. He was well acquainted with many books and different subjects, but his attention had not been judiciously directed to any particular object of study, and accordingly it happened that while his logic was inconclusive, his apothegms and arguments were pregnant with undeniable truths. But the inherent defect of his intellectual character was undoubtedly that mysticism to which I have adverted, and which often betrayed him into a belief of those things, which all correct philosophy at once denies and regrets the evidence.

Although born at Messina, he was brought up from childhood at the beautiful village of Pati, situated on the northern coast of Sicily, opposite to the Lipari Islands and

the ever-burning volcano of Strombolo. The buildings of Pati, like those of other villages, are mean and irregular; but the environs are delightful, and the valley which it overlooks abounds in rural and romantic objects. In a fine autumnal evening, when the stream in the valley runs clear, and the sea is calm, and the smoke of Strombolo stands on the mountain in the form of a majestic tree, it is impossible to desire a sweeter retreat than Pati; and the scenery was engraven on the memory of Francisco, in that state, touched with the tenderest poetical associations. On the surrounding hills he had spent many days alone; he was indeed in his boyhood a strange and solitary creature, but not unsocial. He delighted to trace the recondite resemblances of things, and to muse on the coincidence of dissimilar circumstances, until he had persuaded himself that the whole frame of the world, with all the living inhabitants of the earth, constitute but one great machine, and that however various their motions and movements, a reciprocal correspondence exists between all

the parts. This persuasion was the basis of his reflections, and the fulcrum of his actions. He was heedless alike of what he said or did, but so correct were his feelings, that he seldom committed any natural fault, although constantly violating the artificial proprieties of society.

His friend Salvator was in almost every essential point of character the reverse. In his person he was meagre, the effect of some innate infirmity of constitution, and he had been so early accustomed to take care of his health, that the habit had grown into a sort of physical decorum which regulated the very method of his walk and deportment. In judgment he was superior to most young men of his age, and he had been educated so judiciously that his natural abilities were seen to so much advantage, that a general expectation prevailed that he would one day become a distinguished ornament to his country. But if he actually did possess any superiority of talent, it was blighted by his bodily indisposition, for he never executed any thing above respectable mediocrity. In

his affections he was cold and systematic, and while he judged with severity of the indiscretions of his neighbours, he preserved himself blameless by the retired sobriety which his infirm health obliged him to practice. The only individual in whose welfare he ever took any interest was Francisco, but it was doubtful to say whether their intimacy in what concerned him could be entitled to the name of friendship, for in the subsequent trials and difficulties to which the enthusiast was exposed, he seemed to shrink from the responsibility which he had incurred by having been so long his particular associate. A character of this kind is the most unsatisfactory in all its relations—the code of decorum is substituted for the emotions of the heart, and the tribunal of public opinion is oftener appealed to than the eternal principles of affection. But it is the sort of character which, in a certain scale of private life, obtains the greatest share of respect—it obtains the homage usually paid to virtue by merely abstaining from doing as little wrong, as it is negative in good. It

cannot be trusted in the hour of adversity, and it chills the satisfaction of prosperity, by the prudential circumspection of its congratulations.

The father of Francisco died while he was an infant, and his mother having retired to a convent about two years before the earthquake, he had come to reside with his uncle, the Baron Alcamo, at Messina. The old gentleman, as the reader has been already informed, had considerable pretensions to the character of a philosopher, and it is but strict justice to say, that as far as a knowledge of books can constitute a claim to the title, he had acquired as good a right to it as some of the most presumptuous critics of London, or Paris, or even of Edinburgh.

It was not, however, very easy to understand in what the worthy Baron's philosophy consisted; but it undoubtedly had the effect of rendering him testy and impatient of contradiction, and of inspiring him with a snappish contempt for the opinions of every one who would not subscribe to his dogmas. He was nevertheless a good kind of hu-

mourist, and dressed himself with great care and decorum ; wore spacious knee and shoe buckles, a handsome sword, which by the bye is not a philosophical instrument ; and moreover, in addition to a well frizzled snowy periwig, a cocked hat of the amplest dimensions.

His family, besides Francisco, consisted of Madam the Baroness, and Adelina his niece, the sister of Francisco. The Baroness was a lady more distinguished for the magnitude of her body than the capacity of her mind, but she was kindly and good humoured, and cherished the utmost respect for the learning and wisdom of her husband—a felicity which few philosophers enjoy in their domestic circle.

Adelina was just entering her twentieth year, and was formed in the most voluptuous mould of Italian beauty, but with so timid and innocent an air, that those who admired her the most, thought more of the interesting sweetness of her beseeching eyes than the full rounded luxuriousness of her person. In her heart she was devoted to the cloister,

but her aunt was so kind to her, her uncle so happy with her, and her brother so dear to her, that she stifled the religious wishes of her own spirit, and was content to endure the trials and vicissitudes of the world, with the meekness of a martyr, for the sake of these affectionate friends.

But it is time that we should resume the thread of our narrative, especially as we have much to tell respecting prior events.

assumed the most profound humility and respect.

Francisco noticed the whole of his behaviour with a degree of curiosity so intense, that it was almost as painful as anxiety. Father Anselmo had in the mean time addressed himself to the Baroness, and pointing to the convict, said, "He is an extraordinary man, and I doubt not was originally a gentleman."

"I don't think so," interrupted Francisco, who had overheard the Friar's observation, and going briskly towards Don Birbone, inquired how long he had been a convict.

"Sixteen years! it has been my misfortune"—was the emphatic answer.

These few words were uttered with so many inflections of voice, and with such suppressed emotion, that it produced a momentary awe on all except Francisco.

In the meantime, much to the satisfaction of Signor Scaldarava, the cook, supper was placed on the table, and when the company

took their seats, Don Birbone sat down next to Adelina.

During supper Corneli was sometimes dejected and absent, at others cheerful and talkative. The Baroness was ever and anon chiding Francisco for absence and inadvertency. Anselmo recounted to the Baron the different measures that he had superintended to extricate the inhabitants from the ruins, and Don Birbone, the felon, with an easy assurance endeavoured to engross the attention of the lovely and pious Adelina. The vivacity of his countenance was in this situation so different from the morose scowl which he commonly wore, that he seemed to be quite another being. But in the opinion of Francisco, who watched him narrowly, the expression of his physiognomy was more disagreeable than before. It was bold and sensual, a strong animal earnestness with which but little intellectual expression was blended ; amidst the darker trouble of his visage, however, the glow of purer thoughts were sometimes visible, like transient vistas of the moonlighted sky seen

through the openings of black and tempestuous clouds.

Francisco shuddered, and wished his sister at Jerico rather than so near a manifest libertine, a felon that had already been several times subjected to public punishment. But she was unconscious of any danger, and listened to Don Birbone with an innocent patience of look that shewed the most perfect indifference to all he said. The audacious reprobate, piqued by her negligence, redoubled his endeavours to attract her notice, till he happened to meet the vigilant eye of her brother, from which he shrunk within himself, as if he had been detected in the perpetration of some guilty purpose.

"I see you can relish liberty," said Francisco, bitterly.

"I mean to do so," was the menacing retort of the criminal, accompanied with a look that he meant should command; but the simple young man to whom it was addressed, began to feel the latent energy of his own powers, and replied, "Be-

ware!" with the frown and sternness of an avenger.

Brief as this colloquy was, it attracted the attention of the Count, who looked alternately at Francisco and Don Birbone, unable to comprehend the meaning of what passed, but fearful and anxious about its import.

Meanwhile, the Baron was so engrossed by Father Anselmo, that he had been entirely prevented from holding any conversation with the convict, and he wished the Friar twenty times buried in the ruins from which he had assisted to rescue so many men, women, and children, that there seemed to be no end to his narrative. The whole evening passed away without affording him an opportunity to ask a single question, so that when the guests rose to take leave for the night, he stepped cordially round the table to Don Birbone, and was on the point of requesting to see him again, when Francisco rose indignantly, and exclaimed,

"Sir, if you respect yourself or your family, let us see no more of that man."

The countenance of Corneli brightened at this sally; but, in the same instant, the convict looked at him so significantly that his lips became pallid, and he shook with agitation. The Friar bowed and hurried away. The Baron gazed at his nephew petrified with astonishment; the Baroness clasped her hands together, believing him stark mad; and Adelina, no less surprised than either, stepped aside and serenely awaited the result; for Don Birbone seemed resolved to defy her brother. Francisco, however, without heeding the front of his audacity, turned to him with a calm and dignified frown, and said, "Whatever may have been the crimes and errors of your past life, be assured that they have given you no warrant to obtrude your infamy into this house. If Count Corneli has at any time been so far left to himself, as to commit his honour and character to your discretion, he alone must be responsible for the consequences."

The Count attempted, in great confusion, to interrupt Francisco, but the indignant young man exclaimed,

“ Silence, my lord, silence! you have forfeited your own respect, and cannot obtain mine. I seek not to know what secret compact of mutual guilt has connected you with that felon. But convinced that you are in his power, and that he is bad, I require no angel to tell me, that by your means, he may bring grief and infamy into this family; I therefore command you both instantly to quit the house.”

The Baron lifted his hand, and would have rebuked Francisco for presuming thus to dictate to his guests, but the other calmly prevented him, by saying,

“ There is no one present that ought to be offended at what I do. The two criminals there understand me, and you who do not, must be satisfied that a person who has been so long under public punishment, can never be a fit guest in the house of any honourable man. The Count, it is true, has hitherto borne an unspotted name, but that, has only been during the short time he has resided in Messina: what he may have done

elsewhere, his own conscience and this convict best can tell."

Francisco would have proceeded, but Don Birbone, with an agitated countenance and a faltering voice, interrupted him, and said to Corneli,

"My Lord, your line is run out. This earthquake has shaken more things than the city of Messina, and your house and character have fallen together. Expose yourself no farther by remaining here, but come with me: you know that the young man speaks truth, and there are other witnesses besides his suspicions and your own conscience. The earthquake has not only buried the living, but it has forced the graves to cast up the dead. Come with me,—come away,—your lease has expired,—you must now pay the price of your indulgence. Come, wretched man, come." And he dragged him from the room with the energy of a demon. The Count made no resistance. His teeth chattered, his face became of a gangrene yellow hue,

his eye-balls distended and glassy, and his arms and limbs lost all faculty of power and action. His appearance was, indeed, so livid and hideous, and the image of it remained so clammy in the recollection of the spectators, that it was some time before they were sensible he had actually been withdrawn from their sight.

CHAPTER V.

Sweet husband, dwell not upon circumstance,
When weeping sorrow, like an advocate,
Importunes you for aid ; look in mine eye,
There you shall see dim grief swimming in tears.

MARLOWE.

ALTHOUGH the Count Corneli was a native of Messina, he had left it at so early an age, that, when he returned to reside in his paternal mansion, he was considered as a stranger. None of his numerous relations could recognize in him the features of that blithe and blooming boy, whose frank hilarity in childhood promised so many noble qualities in the development of riper years. And he evinced himself such a decided aversion to speak of the circumstances of his past life, that he

sometimes rebuffed even his visitors when they enquired about events which took place during the time he resided in Palermo, and with the particulars of which he could hardly have been unacquainted.

That he was a man of great opulence could not be questioned in Messina, and of uncommon attainments, was evident whenever he chose to unbend. He spoke several languages with grace and fluency, and his knowledge was various and extensive, but it was not of that circumstantial kind which is obtained by literary research. He was, in fact, one of those men who, with an apt and observant genius, turn favourable situations for studying mankind to immediate and practical advantage, and who neither feel the delight of investigating science for the sake of truth, nor know the pleasure of cultivating art as the means of augmenting enjoyment.

At the early age of six years, he was sent to Naples to be educated under the direction of his maternal uncle, the celebrated Prince Buzo, who was not more distinguished for

his taste and accomplishments than the number of his patriotic schemes to promote the improvement of his native country. In the progress of his education Corneli distinguished himself by the avidity with which he seized the instruction of his masters, but he was no less remarkable for the libertine gaiety of his disposition; and, as he grew up to manhood, his habits became more and more dissipated.

In consequence of some flagrant indiscretion in an affair of gallantry, he was obliged to quit Naples, and he went to Palermo, where, soon after his arrival, he happened to meet the sister of the Baron Alcamo, a young lady in the bloom of youth and beauty, and who was even more fascinating by the touching simplicity of her manners, than by the matchless luxuriance of her personal charms. She was then in the eighteenth year of her age, and Corneli had but just turned one-and-twenty. He fell passionately in love with her at first sight, wooed her with irresistible assiduity, and finally obtained her in marriage. But his passion

was of that base kind which, unmixed with any association of intellectual esteem, expires with the first indulgence.

In the course, however, of his suit to this lovely and innocent girl, he had inspired her with sentiments such as his general profligacy might have been supposed little calculated to produce; for he possessed from nature, the fatal gift of recommending himself by a thousand indiscribable little offices of urbanity to those against whom he meditated the worst designs, and he never employed them with so much effect as in this instance.

The honey-moon was scarcely over when his indifference towards his beautiful wife was notorious to all the fashionable circles of Palermo, and exposed her to their most dangerous temptations. Happily for herself, however, the affection which she cherished for her unworthy husband, was exalted by her own pure thoughts into a duty so high and holy, that his neglect and injustice furnished additional motives for the preservation of her conjugal virtue. She

submitted, with the resignation of a martyr, to the most obvious indications of his distaste, consoled by the pleasing, though simple hope, that in the end her patient love would be rewarded by some kind return.

Corneli had felt for her all the ardour of passion that his heart could feel—a gross and animal desire, which, having gratified at the expence of his liberty, made him regard her with an antipathy scarcely more refined than the enmity with which a convict contemplates his fetters, that no polish or decoration can alter from the nature of chains.

Soon after her unfortunate marriage, the Countess Corneli found herself destined to be a mother, and the hope of regaining the affections of her lord was strengthened by the tender reflections which this endearing circumstance naturally awakened. But day after day his visits to her apartment, where she was obliged to confine herself by the advice of her medical attendants, became seldomer, and ultimately, for more than a week together, he did not even enquire of the servants respecting her health.

Such cruel conduct, in almost any other man, might have been ascribed to studied malice or meditated malignity, but in this ill-fated nobleman it was the native consequence of an uncontrolled indulgence of his own humours. He was perhaps originally not without an estimable share of generosity, and with all his faults he seemed still to possess a frank and friendly heart, but the remorse which he occasionally experienced at his own misconduct, acted as a corrosive to his better qualities, and instead of tending to stop his guilty career, only galled and goaded him on to deeper and deeper wickedness.

His pale and uncomplaining lady, nevertheless, still nourished the languishing hope of her affection with the religious solicitude of a vestal attending the sacred fire, and when the fulness of her time, with its pains and dangers were past, she thought with less delight that she was the mother of a son, than of the prospect that it seemed to afford of interesting the heart of his father.

Still she was disappointed. It is true that Corneli rejoiced with a degree of paternal energy at the birth of an heir, but he was at the time engaged in a criminal intrigue with the lady of the viceroy, and the pleasure which he experienced in looking at his child, was only as a glimpse of the clear blue sky, seen through the rolling darkness and gloomy fires which accompany the eruptions of Mount Etna.

It is one of the many felicities of the Sicilian climate, that women suffer less in childbed there than in almost any other part of the world. The Countess had been weak and infirm during the greatest part of her pregnancy, but her recovery was rapid and complete.

One evening, when she had herself hushed her infant to sleep, as she was sitting at the window of the chamber looking towards the disappearing sun, and melted into more than usual sadness by the tender cares and fears with which the sight of her sleeping child filled her bosom, she was roused from her reverie by the sound of hasty steps approach-

ing the door—she started up to shide the intruder, apprehensive that the noise would disturb her baby, but the fervour of the moment instantly changed, when she beheld his father, and before she had power to speak found herself in his arms.

It was not however the embrace of affection. He lifted her hastily, and without uttering a word, carried her down into the court-yard, and seated her in a close chariot, ordering the coachman to drive at full speed to Termini.

The suddenness of this adventure, and the satisfaction which she experienced in being so near the man to whom her affections were rivetted, so divided her mind that she remained for some time silent, nor, indeed, till admonished by the fullness of the maternal bosom that her infant would soon require assistance, did she express any surprise at what had taken place.

As the carriage ascended the hill, on the eastern slope of which the town of Termini is situated, she laid her hand on the Count's,

and with a diffident softness of manner, said—

“I do not ask you, my Lord, to explain to me the cause of this sudden excursion, for I am too happy in being with you not to regard it almost as a favour. But I am anxious to know your intentions, for our little boy will soon need his mother.”

“Don’t trouble yourself, he will follow us,” was the abrupt answer; and on turning to descend the declivity of the street, the Countess heard the cries of her infant from a carriage which followed them.

Her husband and child with her, this amiable and gentle creature had no other anxiety—her heart was bound up in these two objects, and to her all the world was where they were.

Her surprise, however, was renewed by observing that instead of stopping in the town, they proceeded with unabated speed on the road along the shore towards Cefala.

When they had driven about a mile be-

yond Termini, the confidential servant of the Count came to the door of the carriage on horseback, and the coachman pulled up—

“All is ready,” said the man, and Corneli, without reply, sprang out and bade the Countess alight. Impatient to embrace her infant, she readily obeyed, and ran to the coach behind where he was with his nurse; but before she had time to take him in her arms, the Count called to her impatiently to make haste. In the same moment the dashing of approaching oars was heard, and a scampavia, which had been concealed by the rocks, came to the beach where they were standing.

The Countess pressed her child to her bosom; and Corneli, assisting her into the boat, also lifted in the female domestic, and ordered the men to push off.

CHAPTER VII.



How beautiful is night !
A dewy freshness fills the silent air,
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of Heaven.

SOUTHEY.

It was a glorious Sicilian evening when the fugitives embarked. The sun had set about an hour before, but the saffron-coloured twilight still glowed over all the western heavens. The bay of Palermo, covered with numerous fishing boats, and the torches with which the fishermen attract their prey, presented a brilliant and lively scene. The inhabitants of Termini had also lighted their lamps, and the appearance of the town, sloping down from the top of a steep hill, emulated the splendour of the constellations that were every

moment kindling thicker and brighter over the whole expanse of a serene and cloudless sky. As the mariners dipped their oars in the water, it might be said that they bruised the crystalline tranquillity of the sea into silvery dust, so pure and beautiful was the effect of that phosphoric lustre so often observed beneath the prow and oar in the calm summer nights of the Mediterranean. It was indeed an evening when light, in all its softest and tenderest modifications, appeared at once diffused and sprinkled over the whole face of nature—in such evenings the enthusiasm of the innocent mind is exalted to piety, and the sorrows of the unfortunate appeased to repose.

The Countess had no upbraiding thoughts, and as she fondled her infant, she experienced a degree of delight to which she had long been a stranger. Content to be with her husband, and hopeful that whatever might have been his indiscretion, it would lead to some renewal of those attentions with which he had first won her love, she refrained from disturbing his taciturnity by

any questions. She was not ignorant of his libertinism, and she lamented it with a sentiment of remorse analogous to the sense of conscious weakness in herself, instead of regarding it with that moral antipathy which it was calculated to awaken in so pure a mind. She did not require to be told that he had committed some offence which obliged him to fly from Palermo, but his disgrace or his misfortunes were her own, free however from the shame of the one, and without the sadness which renders the other painful; for she was animated with the desire of sweetening his misery from whatever cause arising.

When they had been about an hour at sea, and her child asleep on her lap, she took an opportunity, on hearing Corneli order the boatmen to turn to the westward, instead of continuing easterly as they had done after quitting the shore, to enquire whither he intended to go.

"I have not yet made up my mind," said he, with some degree of emotion.

At sea, in an open boat at night, not dar-

ing to touch the only shore in view, and not knowing to what other to steer! The Countess sighed deeply, but mourned to think of the anxiety he must suffer.

At this juncture a light breeze from the east came rippling the surface of the water, and the Count bade the men spread the sails and keep along the coast before the wind.

About midnight the Countess, exhausted by her anxieties and the fatigue of nursing, inquired if there was any wine on board, for she felt herself faint, and was in need of some refreshment.

The Count directed his servant, who was seated beside the nurse at some distance from them, to bring the flask.

There was something so remarkable in the manner with which he gave this order, that the Countess, before tasting what was poured out for herself, said,

“My Lord, you seem to require it as much as I do, pray take a little,” and she offered him the cup. He took it from her, carried it to his lips, but without tasting, returned it to her hand.

In the course of a few minutes after drinking the wine, she became exceedingly drowsy, and giving her child to the woman, laid herself at the feet of her husband on a carpet, which his servant in the mean time had spread, as if he anticipated the immediate effects of the draught.

On the same evening in which Count Corneli and his family so abruptly fled from Palermo, the lady of the viceroy was secretly conveyed away from the city. It was understood that she was placed in a convent, and the following night a lady was brought to the gate of a small nunnery in Maritimo, one of the *Ægædean* islands, and lodged there as a boarder. Such was the general rumour concerning her.

The particular convent here alluded to is not entirely devoted to the service of religion; it is perhaps more entitled to be considered as an hospital for female lunatics than as a sanctuary; for many of the unhappy women who have pined away within its walls, were as such abandoned by their relations.

The situation of the building is singularly lonely and retired. It stands in a hollow of the hills, and from the windows only the rugged forehead of an uncultivated mountain is visible. A few olive trees wave their dusky foliage near the gate, and the garden which extends along the steep ascent behind, consists chiefly of vines that overarch the walks and alleys whose bowery luxuriance has even an air of mystery and confinement.

When the Countess fell asleep, the Count ordered the boatmen to make for the shore, but a smart breeze springing up, they were unable to effect a landing. As the day dawned, the city of Trapani appeared in sight, but Corneli not choosing to go there, it was necessary to proceed to the *Ægædean* islands, which lie off that coast, and the boat accordingly passed under the walls of the town.

The Countess still continued in profound sleep, although the wakeful cries of her infant might have pierced the slumbers of a less tender and anxious mother.

About an hour after mid-day, the boat reached the island of Maritimo, and the men being worn out with fatigue, the Count permitted them to row into a little cove where the overshadowing cliffs afforded protection from the heat of the sun. The Countess still remained asleep.

While the mariners were taking some refreshment, one of the boats employed in the coral fishery also came in; and Corneli entering into conversation with an old man, who acted as the superintendant of the fishers, learnt among other particulars respecting this seldom-visited island, that it contained a small village, near to which the solitary and sequestered convent is situated.

On receiving this information, the Count suddenly dropped the conversation, and fell into a sullen and abstracted state of thoughtfulness, during which his eye was observed to wander occasionally from the Countess to the child.

When the men had finished their meal, and were ready to proceed again to sea, he

ordered them to row for the village. The day being now far advanced, and the breeze having slackened, it was late in the afternoon before they reached the landing-place.

The Countess had slept upwards of sixteen hours, and her infant had also been lulled by a portion of the same opiate which weighed so heavily on his mother's senses. As the boat approached the landing-place, the child awoke, and crying bitterly, it became necessary to rouse the Countess also, which was with some difficulty accomplished. Her mind, however, remained affected by the fumes of the drugged wine, and wandered in vague efforts to discriminate the facts of memory from the phantoms of the imagination.

In this dubious state she was landed on the beach, and conducted by Corneli, followed by the servants, to a little shop in the village. Here the Count left her, while she nursed her child, and when he returned, she partook of a little wine, and a bit of black bread, which hunger rendered palatable.

In his absence he had been at the Convent, to which he proposed she should walk, and endeavour to obtain lodgings for the night, and after lulling her babe, she went with him. On their way thither he spoke for the first time of his flight, and appeared unusually kind and flattering in his attentions. He told her in general terms that it was necessary he should remain concealed for some time, and that he expected from her affectionate conduct as a wife, and which he confessed was far beyond what he deserved, that she would submit to the hardship of their fortunes with patience.

Happy to have it in her power to show him how entirely she was devoted to his wishes, she readily promised to perform all in her power to oblige him, and assured him that if her ability were equal to her will, there was no hardship or difficulty that she would not cheerfully encounter for his sake.

In this frame they reached the gate, and she was delivered to the custody of the Abbess, with whom the Count had previously arranged the terms of her entertainment.

As she had no conception that he intended to deprive her of her child, she saw him return to the village with some degree of pleasure, believing that he was gone to bring the infant and nurse. But the moment that he regained the town, he hurried all on board, carrying with them a milch goat, which his servant had provided during the time he was with the Countess at the Convent. The goat was for the infant ; and they again sailed without having settled any determinate course.

CHAPTER VIII.

————— I have ne'er a friend,
No country, father, brother, kinsman left
To weep my fate or sigh my funeral:
I roll but up and down, and fill a seat
In the dark cave of dusky misery.

MARSTON.

THE abbess of St. Caterina had a large grey wart on the left side of her nose, to which we give due precedence, as it was unquestionably the most remarkable feature of her face; her nose being in other respects not different in any essential particular from what is usually worn by very ordinary woman, of three score and upwards. In stature she exceeded the middle size, and she was proportionably stout in her general configuration; her voice was loud and penetrating, and possessed more of the masculine tenour, than of the shrill feminine

treble ; her eyes were sharp, but unsettled, which gave an indiscrible something to the expression of her countenance, so far from being calculated to conciliate the good will of strangers, that it was apt to make them suspect she meant to do them an injury. It was a forbidding face, but not a very faithful index to the mind of the possessor, for the Abbess was at bottom a personage of no mean understanding. Indeed it very seldom happens that the superiors of the religious houses, whether male or female, are at all deficient in the necessary requisites of good common sense, however wanting they may be occasionally in devotional enthusiasm.

When the Abbess had conducted the Countess to the refectory, she eyed her from head to foot suspiciously, keeping aloof, as if in apprehension of some burst of passion ; for Corneli, without informing her of his name and rank, had told her that his wife, having suddenly lost a child, was so affected by the event, that her wits were impaired, and she was subject to violent paroxysms

of insane grief. It was for this reason he pretended that he was desirous of placing her for some time in the convent.

The old lady was too well acquainted with stories of this kind, to give full credit to what he said, but she was also prudent enough not to question the truth of his statements. He had deposited with her a considerable sum of money, promising more in due time, and it was the interest of the holy mother to be civil to customers, especially to those who were so liberal. But when she saw the exhausted appearance of the Countess, and contemplated her disordered dress, and flushed and wandering look, the consequence of being prematurely awakened from the effects of the opiate, she was persuaded that there was little reason to doubt the account which she had received of her patient, and she was the more confirmed in this opinion, as the unhappy Countess frequently sighed deeply, and endeavoured to suppress a sorrow, that frequently flooded her eyes with tears.

The Abbess retired for a few minutes,

and returned accompanied by one of the nuns, a tall, lean, yellow, elderly damsel of forty-five, with small eyes, and a red nose, the complexion of which did not harmonize very beautifully with the dingy hue of her cheeks.

"She is a kind hearted excellent creature," said the Abbess, "there is not one of the sisterhood half so much so, and she will give you every assistance in her power."

The old lady spoke to her prisoner, as if she entertained no doubt whatever of her being of a sound mind, but her manner showed that she was distrustful.

The Countess thanked her for being so attentive, but added, "I shall have little occasion to trouble her, for my own woman, who will be here presently with my little boy, is quite sufficient for all the attendance I shall require. I nurse him myself; poor helpless thing, he has been many a day my only consolation, and he must be now my companion."

The Abbess and sister Marguiretta exchanged glances, and the latter stepping for-

ward, raising her hands, which were so broad, that contrasted with her lean scanty arms, could only be compared to shovels, said in a wheedling manner, but not without an accent of genuine kindness, "Ah, my dear madam, you must not indulge your grief in this way, but endeavour to endure the loss of your little boy with resignation!"

"The loss!" exclaimed the Countess—"O, is it so?—what will become of me—my poor baby gone—myself here forsaken—abandoned! Where am I? Into what strange region have I been transported, or do I but dream?—I lulled my little boy to sleep—I placed him softly on his couch—I sat at the window of my chamber, looking at the glorious setting sun—surely, surely, I fell at that time asleep, and all this is but a dream—an incoherent dream!"

These impassioned exclamations were uttered with so much sorrow, and so wildly and rapidly, that the two witnesses were perfectly convinced of her delirium.

When some time had elapsed, more than sufficient for the Count to have returned

from the village, the disconsolate mother's anxieties became extreme, and she walked hurriedly across the room, wringing her hands, and weeping bitterly. On a sudden she darted towards the door, with the design of running herself to the house, where she had left her child, in order to ascertain the true extent of her misfortune; but, sister Marguiretta seized her firmly by the wrist, while the Abbess rung a bell, which summoned two other of the sisterhood, who forced the unfortunate lady into an elbow chair, to which they fastened her hands. This treatment, with the anguish of her mind, and the milk flowing into her bosom without being relieved, brought on a fever. In the course of a few hours, she was so delirious, that it required the three nuns to hold her down, after they had removed her to bed; and in this state she continued several days, raving continually of her infant and describing him as perishing of hunger before her.

Her constitution, which was naturally good, triumphed over the malady, and one after-

noon she fell into a calm and profound sleep, from which she awoke free from fever ; her thoughts tranquil, and her mind collected, but sorrowful.

Whether the soul, during the temporary suspension of the senses in sleep, arrives by some unconscious process at rational conclusions or forms volitions, which afterwards become the springs of actions, is a question that has often been discussed without being satisfactorily answered. In the present instance, however, it soon appeared that the affections on the Countess had undergone a radical change, and that the love which she had so fondly cherished for her libertine husband, existed no longer. But she suffered much from despondency, and often wept from a weariness of life.

As she gained strength, this depression became lighter, and the nuns felicitated themselves of the progress of a surprising cure, which they attributed, not without as much reason as more celebrated practitioners have done in similar cases, to the effect of their skill and prescriptions.

CHAPTER IX.



But see—stand here and cast thine eyes below
O'er the broad ocean to the distant sky,
See what confusion fills the raving deep,
What mountain billows rise! 'Tis terrible
And suiting to the horrors of my fate.

A. HILL.

ALTHOUGH the Countess was perfectly convinced in her own mind of the treachery of her husband, a sense of self-respect deterred her from communicating to any of the sisterhood the extent of her wrongs, her own rank, and the names of her connections. She waited patiently in the hope that the Count, according to his promise, would send the Abbess an additional sum of money, expecting to hear at the same time of her child, but she waited in vain; week after week passed away, and the summer was nearly over, and the hospitality of the nuns abated in civility. Her health however con-

tinued to improve, and her mind acquired new vigour at once from her recovery and the impression of her injuries.

When the hope of hearing from her husband had entirely vanished, she resolved to act for herself, and without informing any of her friends, she determined to acquiesce as it were in the destiny to which she seemed to be consigned. Considering that she owed all the peculiar griefs of her present helpless condition to her husband, she made up her mind to leave him to account to the world and her relations, for what had become of her, while she should pursue, in her own sequestered course, the path which duty and virtue alike required her to follow.

During the weaker stages of her convalescence, her thoughts naturally enough often contemplated the peacefulness and security of the cloister, and in these moments she was inclined to take the veil. She had an aunt who presided over a nunnery at Sciacca, where young ladies of rank were educated, and the professed sisterhood of which were celebrated equally for their

accomplishments and piety. To this relation she at one time resolved to confide the extent of her misfortunes, and under her roof to devote the remainder of her days to the service of religion. But as her strength increased, her mind took a more active bias, and while she decided on making her aunt to a certain degree acquainted with the necessities of her situation, her resolution was to extricate her son from the contaminating protection of his profligate father.

Accordingly, when she had been about three months in the Convent of St. Catharina, she wrote to her aunt a short letter, in which she adverted to the flight of the Count from Palermo as a circumstance with which she supposed her already acquainted; and mentioned that in the hurry and alarm of their departure, they had been but slenderly provided with money, in consequence of which her husband had been obliged to leave her in the convent, where she then was, but from which she was desirous of removing, until she heard some tidings of what had happened to him since.

Having sent off this letter, she waited anxiously for an answer, and at the end of two days, a Capuchin friar, belonging to a monastery of that order in Sciacca, came from Trapani, with a verbal message from her aunt that she should place herself for the journey under his protection.

Father Leonardo was a thick set squat figure, with a short curly black beard, small twinkling eyes, a very little nose, and smooth round chubby cheeks. His complexion indicated a feminine softness of character, but there was a good humoured simplicity in his manner which gained the affection of all his acquaintance, unmixed with any portion of respect. He was a great favourite with the children wherever he was known, and nobody spoke to him in passing without a joke or smile, so that he was commonly considered as one of the happiest creatures in all Sicily.

When he had conversed with the Countess about half an hour, he mentioned that the boat in which he had come from Trapani was going to Sciacca, and that if she

could be ready in time, it was a blessed opportunity, for the boatmen were as clever as English sailors and as brave as elephants.

Father Leonardo, in ordinary cases, would have compared them to lions, but while he was in Trapani, in which the fine arts have been long cultivated, he had seen an alabaster elephant with a castle on his back to hold a watch, and the size, strength, and sagacity of the animal being explained to him with many anecdotes, he thought it a much nobler beast than a lion. "In short, my lady," continued Father Leonardo, "be ruled by me, and come in the boat. The *mal aria*, that devilish wind, infects at this season the fenny lands between Trapani and Marsala, and the country beyond is frightfully beset with banditti. I have heard such things of their doings, that I would not for the papacy go by land, but if you insist, of course I must submit; otherwise, the worthy Abbess, your aunt, mercy on us! how she would lecture, were

I not to cherish and protect you as the apple of my eye."

The Countess, however, did not require much persuasion. She was eager to quit the sullen sisterhood with whom she had resided so long, and although the dangers had been greater and more manifold than what the Friar represented them to be, she would have made no scruple of going immediately by land ; at the same time, she was glad to hear of an easier, and as she was led to believe, a safer mode of reaching Sciacca, and she instantly got herself in readiness for the voyage.

In the delightful climate of the Mediterranean, the risk of sailing an hundred miles or two in an open boat is not counted any very extraordinary enterprize. But at the period of which we are treating, the Western shores of Sicily were often visited by the Barbary corsairs, and sometimes the equinoxial gales descend on that coast with great violence. Father Leonardo knew this very well, but he dreaded the invisible

demon of the *mal aria*, more than the equinoxial storms and rain, and he deemed the hazard of falling into the hands of the banditti of the woods much greater than the risks of Algerine slavery.

When the Countess had seated herself beside the Friar in the boat, she observed one of the sailors eyeing her particularly, and she soon recognized in him one of the men belonging to the scampavia which had brought her from Termini. She communicated this to Father Leonardo, and requested him to enquire of the man, where her husband had gone on leaving her at the convent. She would have made the enquiry herself, full as she was at the moment of the yearning anxieties of a mother, but she could not submit to allow any one to think her a deserted wife; and in consequence, after speaking on the subject to the Friar, she closed her eyes, and affected to be asleep.

The man, however, had nothing particular to tell, further than that the Count, on quitting the island, met with a vessel coming

the boatmen were anxious to reach, but the rising tempest rendered their efforts unavailing.

After tugging at the oar for some time, they found themselves again obliged to hoist one of their sails which they had lowered, and to go on before the wind.

Father Leonardo was quite overcome by the tilting motion of the boat, and so far from being able to continue his ghostly exhortations, he verily believed himself in the agonies of ejecting his own ghost.

The Countess, absorbed in the contemplation of her unhappy fate, sat wrapped in a cloak, and from the lurid magnificence of the heavens, and the driving along on the darkened bosom of the roaring sea, experienced an indescribable feeling that had more of pleasure in it than of dread.

The twilight, which had now almost entirely faded from the west, was soon extinguished by the deepening of the clouds, from which the rain began to descend in torrents. Father Leonardo lay stretched in the bottom of the boat, unable to attend

to any thing but the sense of his own sickness. The boatmen were terrified, but the lady retained her self-possession, and having drawn over her head a part of a sail, looked forth on the darkness and the deluge with the equanimity of Cæsar. Something seemed to whisper to her spirit that she was reserved for greater perils, and she beheld the dangers around her with a solemnity unmixed with any fear.

The rain continued to pour, the night was far advanced, and the boatmen calculated that they should see the lights of Mazzara; but it was a hopeless expectation, for they had no compass on board, and the boat for some time had been going out to sea. The first mention of their apprehension of this being the case, raised a howl from all but the Friar and the Countess. Father Leonardo, completely exhausted by the fatigues of his sickness, had fallen asleep in the bottom of the boat, and his companion was rather surprised than alarmed at the dastardly despair of the boatmen. She chided their pusillanimity, and exhorted them to redouble their vigi-

lance, since they knew not where they were.

The storm increased, and occasional flashes of lightening followed at long intervals with deep and distant peals of thunder, added to the horrors of the night. The boatmen gave themselves up to clamorous despair, and the Countess, daunted by the brighter and broader sheets of lightening and the nearing and louder claps of thunder, shrank in beneath the sail, and commended herself to heaven. Father Leonardo snored in the security of sleep.

The day began to dawn, and the wind having shifted, the boat had altered her course and was now drifting towards the lea shore: she had passed Mazzara, and was close in with the promontory in which the antient city of Selinus once stood, against which the billows were dashing with tremendous fury.

The Countess first observed the land, and seeing the appearance of a considerable town, with churches and steeples, she thought it Mazzara, being unacquainted

with the coast, and roused the men, who were all lying in the bottom of the boat, abandoned to their cowardice. But no sooner had they lifted their heads and seen where they were, than, like frightened children or foolish ostriches, they hid their faces and howled more loudly and madly than before, for they knew the danger of the shore towards which they were driving, and gave themselves up as inevitably lost.

In this trying moment the Countess felt the courage which had hitherto sustained her giving way, and with an urgency that partook of the alarm with which she was seized, she shook Father Leonardo from his slumber, and bade him prepare for death. The Friar, startled by her vehemence, looked up quite recovered, and seeing the boat within gunshot of the breakers, seized the neglected helm with a courage preternatural to his character, and a presence of mind altogether instinctive, and calling on the men to attend the sail, cried he knew the coast, and if they could wea-

ther the cape before them, he would steer them safe into smooth water.

There was inspiration in the hope which Father Leonardo so miraculously awakened, and the sailors were, in an instant, roused and active. In the course of a few minutes they got the boat to the south of the headland, and in less than a quarter of an hour they were in smooth water.

CHAPTER X.

Cypress and ivy, weed and wall-flower grown
Matted and mass'd together, hillocks heap'd
On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
In fragments, chok'd up vaults, and frescos steep'd
In subterranean damp, where the owl peep'd,
Deeming it midnight:—Temples, baths, or halls?
Pronounce who can; for all that learning reap'd
From her research hath been, that these are walls.

LORD BYRON.

BEING now in safety, the Countess was impatient to land, and at her request the men rowed close in to the rocks, where leaping on shore, she scrambled, with what haste she could, up the side of the promontory, without noticing that the stones which obstructed her were fragments of ancient buildings.

The wind was still tempestuous, and the

pouring deluge which had drenched her to the skin, notwithstanding the sail, although abated, was showery, and blew in her face as she climbed among the ruins. Father Leonardo, surprised at the haste of her movements, called to her and inquired whither she was going.

"To the town, yonder," was her brief answer.

"Stop, stop," exclaimed the Friar, "what you see is no town, but only ruins."

The Countess had by this time reached the height, and looking round, at his exclamation, beheld with an acute feeling of dismay, that the objects which she had taken for the churches and towers of Mazzara, were but the broken capitals and columns of the once-stupendous edifices of Selinus, the history of which is so little known, as in the moments of reverie to make us doubt the truth of that of all the antients. What can we credit of the tales of Egypt, of Babylon, or of Rome, when contemplating the relics of a city whose buildings appear to surpass in magnitude even the ornaments of London

and Paris, and respecting which, little more is known than that it has a name and was destroyed ; but when reared or how, and by whom the overthrow was effected, there exists no authentic memorial !

The Countess, dripping wet as she was, felt a sensation approximating to dread, as she looked at the colossal remains of the principal temple, over the sole erect column of which the shower was drifting, like the spray of the waves against the eddystone light-house in a storm.

The Sicilian ladies are but slenderly acquainted with the local history of their interesting island, and the Countess knew as little about Selinus as an ordinary London lady of quality knows of Stonehenge. But it does not require a knowledge of history, to awaken those solemn feelings which the sight of such vast monuments of human effort and skill, naturally affect. They belong to a class of sentiments of far deeper interest, than those derived from the recollection of historical facts. The imagination of the Countess, as she viewed that

assemblage of stupendous ruins, was filled with trains of vague but terrific associations, in which the images of a world that had been broken up, and a gigantic race annihilated for their crimes, were mingled with the darkness of unknown antiquity, and the phantoms of traditionary superstition.

Father Leonardo, who had in the mean time left the boat, followed by one of the men, carrying a basket, which contained their stock of provisions, came toward the Countess.

Under the ledge of one of the vast capitals of the pillars, sheltered by the projection of the corner, the Friar, while the sailor kindled a fire, spread a napkin on the ground, and placing out the provisions, advised the Countess to eat something, setting her at the same time an excellent example himself.

When she had finished a spare meal, and dried herself at the fire, she found her eyes oppressed with sleep, and the Friar assisted her to form a tent, by hanging the sail round two sides of the slanting capital,

Within this sorry tabernacle she spread her cloke, and was soon respited for a time from the sense of her sufferings.

Father Leonardo, who had been so refreshed by his nap in the boat, left her, and walking further up the hill, seated himself behind a pillar, where he sat for some time, contemplating the desolate scene around him, not free from apprehension. The rain having passed off, and the day beginning to clear, he was afraid that some of the banditti who infested that part of the country, would make their appearance.

While he was thus sitting as a sentinel, intently looking towards the shaggy skirts of a wood, he heard a rustling noise near him, and starting up, saw a large gaunt embrowned naked hand and arm thrown into view from behind one of the fragments. Justly alarmed at this apparition, he hastened back to the shore, where for a moment, he halted, irresolute till he saw the boatmen, who had scattered themselves along the beach, coming apparently in great terror, at full speed towards him. Catching

their fears he forgot the Countess and hurried with them on board the boat, and instantly pushed off. In the same instant they heard her shriek, and looking towards the place where she had been left asleep, saw two men, armed with muskets, dragging her away.

CHAPTER XI.



—If thou hast a heart can beat
Evenly in danger ; if thy bowels yearn not
With human fears, at scenes where undisgrac'd
The soldier, tried in battle, might look back
And tremble, follow me !—for I am bound
Into that cave of horrors.

SOUTHEY.

THE Countess, on being first seized by the banditti, endeavoured to resist, and struggled, and implored. But one of them Castagnello, who had hold of her by the arm, and who by his manner and appearance seemed to be the leader, said that it was useless for her to contend—" You must come with us ; we will treat you with the best we have."

The look, deportment, and person of this young man was calculated to make a deep impression on strangers. He might be about five and twenty, but a weather beaten complexion gave him an older look. He

was singularly stoutly formed, handsome and well proportioned, and although he had not worn a faded uniform, his demeanour would have shewn that he had been a soldier.

He at first addressed himself to the Countess with an audacious familiarity, but her air checked his insolence, and he treated her politely, bidding Alphonso, his companion, to set her free, while he dropped her arm from his own grasp.

"I think, madam," said he, "that your protectors have not shewn the courage requisite to defend so precious a trust. They will not return again believe me, and you have no choice, but to make yourself comfortable with us. Give your trinkets and money to Alphonso there, and he will take care of them."

Remonstrance was useless, and the Countess with a degree of composure that astonished the robbers, took out her ear-rings, unlocked her necklace, and pulling off her rings, gave them all to Alphonso.

"Your purse too," said Alphonso sternly.

"It contains little," replied the lady, "and you might spare it."

"Deliver all," cried the fellow abruptly, and the Countess, putting it into his hands burst into tears.

There was something in the way in which she gave him the purse, and so touchingly helpless in her grief, that it moved the compassion of Castagnello, and he attempted to console her, but she interrupted him, exclaiming, "I am surely one of the most unfortunate of women; I freely give you all, but tell me which is the road to Sciacca."

"The road is long," said Castagnello, "and rendered almost impassable by the rain, but our habitation is not far distant, come with us."

These few words, civil enough in their import, were dreadfully alarming to the Countess, not only by the peculiar accent with which they were expressed, but by the terrific familiarity of the look which, at the same moment, Alphonso cast towards her.

She clasped her hands together, and dropping on her knees, instead of beseeching

any compassion from the robbers, committed herself to the care of Heaven, and the special protection of the chaste and blessed Virgin.

When she had finished her prayer, she rose and said to Castagnello, with a serene countenance; but in a manner so emphatic, that it struck him with awe; "I am in your power, but you cannot harm me more than it pleases Heaven to permit: go, I will attend you to your dwelling: I am your prisoner, and if your evil profession has not extinguished the principles of honour, which you were probably once taught, my submission will ensure your protection." But she was ignorant of the history of this dissolute young man.

Castagnello made no reply, but directing Alphonso to step on before, offered his arm to the Countess to assist her along the path, which, winding among the ruins, led towards their retreat. At first she declined this courtesy, but her knees faltered as she went on, and the path being rugged, and on the one side dangerous, she had not advanced many paces till she felt herself so much

in need of support, that she at last took hold of his arm.

When they had walked about two hundred yards, they came to another heap of gigantic ruins, less colossal indeed than those which crown the promontory, but of more elegant workmanship, and still of very extraordinary dimensions ; there the path which they had followed terminated, and Alphonso who had walked on before, suddenly disappeared between two fragments of a fluted column.

"This is our residence," said Castagnello, as they approached the same place ; and the Countess, on looking forward, saw an opening in the ground, and a flight of rude steps descending into what appeared to be a vault, in the substructure of the edifice to which the fragments had belonged. Her heart beat almost audibly at the sight, and she turned a wistful eye to the sun, which was now high in his journey, and free from all the clouds that had obscured his glory in the morning.

Castagnello stopped till she descended into the vault, and then briskly leaping down

took her by the hand, and said, "Don't tremble, come with me."

The light admitted at the aperture by which they entered, did not penetrate far into the vault, but it was sufficient to shew the entrance into another still more obscure, into which they passed, and, turning to the right, entered a gallery.

"These are the catacombs of the ancient city," said Castagnello, breaking silence, "and they are of great extent." The Countess was too much agitated to reply.

When they had gone about twenty paces, a faint light broke in from a hole in the roof, by which the Countess saw that they had reached a circular chamber, where three other galleries met, besides the one by which they had entered.

Castagnello led her into one of these, and being again in darkness, slackened his pace.

"In the name of Heaven," cried the terrified lady, "to what perdition are you leading me?"

"You have nothing to fear in this place," said her conductor, grasping her hand more

firmly as she attempted to withdraw it from his hold, and dragging, rather than leading her, into another central chamber, similar to the former. Thus from gallery to chamber they travelled the mazes of the labyrinth, until the mind of the Countess was completely perplexed by its intricacies.

“You are now safe,” said Castagnello as she approached one of the chambers, which was better lighted than any of the others; and on going forward, the Countess found herself in an apartment, which, but for the horror of her fears and the circumstances with which she was surrounded, would have appeared comparatively comfortable. It was the last of a series, no other passage leading into it, but the one by which they entered. It had probably been a family mausoleum, as it contained two tier of niches round the wall. On the one side stood a rude table, and several benches, and on the other lay a mass of luggage, the spoil of travellers. From some of the upper niches, three or four old muskets

projected, from the muzzles of which several rapiers and swords, much corroded with rust, hung dangling within reach.

Castagnello handed the Countess to one of the benches at the table, and she sat down, overcome with agitation.

The robber observing her pale and trembling, took a flask of wine from one of the niches, and pouring out a glass, requested her to taste. Agitated as she then was, she yet retained sufficient presence of mind to accept his offer, the better to enable her to bear up against the fears she justly entertained.

Castagnello several times addressed her familiarly, but the rebuke of her chaste and lofty indignation, as often repressed his temerity. For upwards of an hour, she thus preserved her superiority, and she experienced some abatement of her apprehensions when she saw Alphonso enter, such is the deterring influence of witnesses, and the encouraging presence of society. But her relief was only for a moment; a few short

sentences between the robbers, raised her alarm a thousand fold ; in this crisis however Furbo, a third of the gang, entered, and reproaching the others for their negligence, told them the travellers were passing ; meaning a party of whom they had received notice from one of their confederates.

Castagnello, with the alacrity of a mind habituated to enterprise, and constitutionally bold, seized his musket, which lay across the table, and desiring the others to walk on before, followed them.

Scarcely had the robbers left the apartment, when the Countess rose and went softly after them. She had previously glanced her eye to the aperture which admitted the light, and saw that it was not only far beyond her reach, by any aid the furniture could afford, but too small to allow her to ascend through it. The idea therefore of following the robbers, had in it something of the character of instinct, for the action preceded the consciousness of the resolution. It was one of those providential inspirations

which are sometimes experienced in dangerous situations, and often successful in contempt of probability.

She allowed the robbers to be in advance about ten paces before her, and when they reached any of the central chambers where light was admitted, and from which the passages diverged, she halted in the darkness of one gallery, until they had turned into another. In this way she reached the long corridore which led to the entrance, and here she stopped some time, that they might be at a distance before she ventured out. She then stepped cautiously forward, and creeping quietly up the steps, which ascended from the vault to the open air, listened before she looked out, and hearing no sound of any person near, was on the point of rushing forth, when she discovered Alphonso coming quickly towards the spot, but fortunately at that moment looking warily behind him.

The sight of this ruffian smote her like an arrow, and she staggered back into the vault almost fainting. In an instant how-

ever she recovered energy and resolution, and hastening back into the gallery, paused to consider what was next to be done.

She recollected that the robbers as they came in, after leaving the gallery in the first central chamber, turned to the right hand, and she resolved to conceal herself in one of the other passages, until they came back. This indeed was the only alternative which presented itself, and she was not suffered to hesitate, for scarcely had the idea crossed her mind when she heard the footsteps of Alphonso in the adjacent vault; running forward, she was immediately in the chamber, and safe as she deemed herself, in a gallery different from the one she expected he would take. But it had not occurred to her that Castagnello in conducting her into their retreat, had taken many circuitious ways, purposely to perplex her. Her terror was therefore raised again to an extreme pitch, when she saw Alphonso, instead of turning to the right, come into the gallery where she had concealed herself.

Castagnello had the outlines of gentleman-

ly manners in his deportment, but Alphonso was a coarse low bred ruffian. He was not much older than his superior, but his habitual vices were all of a grosser kind, and the risk which the Countess ran, from his licentiousness, was in consequence much greater. He was alike incapable of being awed by her dignity, or touched with compassion for her helplessness; and he had withdrawn from his companions, and returned to the catacombs with the foulest intentions. Fortunately however the darkness concealed her from his view, and the echo of his own footsteps prevented him from noticing hers, as she ran softly before him.

The gallery in which they were, was much longer than any of those which the Countess had formerly passed, and it winded to the right and left, so that when it terminated in one of the central chambers where light was admitted, the intervention of the turnings prevented her from being seen by Alphonso.

On reaching this chamber she hesitated for a moment, but her ignorance of the secrets of the place left her no alternative;

and on hearing the approach of the robbers, she rushed into the nearest opening, and hurried on again in the dark. She had not however advanced many paces, when she stumbled and fell against a flight of steps which ascended into a higher range of these wonderful excavations. The discovery that the catacombs were not all on the same level, alarmed her greatly, and she went forward groppingly, fearful of falling into some hollow, or down other stairs.

When she had gone forward a few yards, she perceived a faint reflected light on the wall, and on advancing, found it was admitted by a window opening into one of the central apartments, and on a level with the second tier of niches. From this window she saw Alphonso pass below, and she resolved to wait the return of his companions there, persuaded that they would follow the same track.

The terror which had acted with the energy of a spring on her spirits, and given decision to her mind, and strength to her limbs, began to slacken in the comparative

safety which she had now attained, and she found herself so worn out and exhausted, as to be scarcely able to stand. She sat down on the floor near the window, and bent her head against the wall, ruminating on the calamities which had befallen her, and shuddering with disgust as she reflected on the infamy which the robbers evidently meditated. But distressing as these thoughts were, a profound heaviness weighed down her eyelids, and she frequently started, conscious of having actually fallen asleep.

In one of those momentary snatches of oblivion, she thought that she had looked down into the chamber through which Alphonso passed, and seen Castagnello enter with his sword drawn and bloody, leading a prisoner, in whose pallid visage, spotted with gore, she recognised the features of her husband. This spectacle affected her so much that she attempted to cry out but could not, and, for some time after, there was a blank in her recollection, so that it is probable she had fainted.

When she came to herself she listened

and thought she heard the breathing of some one near her, and presently she felt what she conceived to be the toes of a naked foot touch her hand. It was however but a lizard. The attachment of this innocent reptile to the human species, particularly when it finds them asleep, has procured it in some countries the honorable name of the man-keeper. The antient sculptors, when they personified sleep, represented it as a sleeping infant, attended by a lizard. Along all the shores of the Mediteranean, this harmless creature is held in much respect by the peasants and shepherds, whom as they often lie slumbering in the fields it awakens, by running over their faces, on the approach of serpents, or other dangers.

When the Countess had quite recovered from her alarm, she was in great doubt whether the sight she had seen was the apparition of a dream, or a reality, and under the influence of this new source of anxiety, she could not decide whether she ought to quit the catacombs, or endeavour to ascertain the fact.

CHAPTER XII.



I charge thee to return and change thy shape:
Go, and return, an old Franciscan friar,
That holy shape becomes a devil best.

MARLOWE.

IN the meantime Father Leonardo, and the gallant mariners had hastened with what speed they could, aided by a favourable breeze, and goaded by terror, which redoubled their vigour at the oar, towards a watch tower which stands about a mile from the place where they had left the Countess. Here they expected to find refuge for themselves, and to incite the guard, who had charge of the tower, to go to the lady's assistance. But the guard consisted only of one solitary invalid, and he had set off at break of day for Castel Vetrano, with the intention of resigning his office, the tower having

been rendered uninhabitable by the storm and rain of the preceding night.

On arriving at the tower and finding it deserted, Father Leonardo was thrown into great perplexity. But, like many other great men in difficult situations, he deemed it expedient to hold a council of war, desirous that the result should be a resolution on the part of all the boatmen to proceed forthwith to Sciacca. Accordingly, with that curious loquacity, peculiar to the Sicilians, after disposing his features into all the solemnity of which they were susceptible, he addressed his companions to the following effect :

“How unfortunate we all are : there never were any men so unfortunate : but the Countess and myself are in the worse state of all. After resolving to come by sea, and agreeing to pay you ten dollars for our passage to Sciacca, on being safely landed there, (and which, unless we are safely landed at Sciacca, you can never expect to receive,) to be overtaken by such a storm. Lord, deliver us ! for I never thought to set

my foot on dry land again. Then, scarcely out of the mouths of the fishes, than we fall into the clutches of those incarnated devils, the banditti; for, I may well say we, the Countess being seized by them, and not she only, but all the money that was provided for the voyage. Were we, however, safe and speedily at Sciacca, there would be no lack of good money, for her aunt, the Abbess of the Cisterians, a most excellent pious creature as any in the whole world, and withal of so charitable a mind that she will think no more of giving you ten dollars for bringing me than I do of that spittle, as she will undoubtedly offer a great reward for the redemption of her niece from those horrid Philistines. Heavens! what a stir that excellent woman will make when she hears what has happened. Magistrates and military—all will be roused, running here, talking there; we shall see if we arrive in time with the news, all the people of Sciacca, men and women, young and old, in commotion. And then, the Countess herself is so rich; what will

she not give to her deliverers! but every honest man who would share her favour, must make haste to go to Sciacca, for where are arms to be had but there? You could never think of going to Castel Vetrano, although it is said to be several miles nearer, for no rich Abbess of the Cister-tians, aunt to the Countess, is there. You might go it is true, but what end would it serve? Are you sure, in the first place, of any assistance there? or, in the second, who in Castel Vetrano will offer any reward for the rescue of the Countess? Then, think were we to go there first, and be afterwards obliged to go to Sciacca, what an age of time would be lost. Besides, not a rood of the road to Castel Vetrano do I know, and I am sure you are all equally ignorant, at least, who among you do you think I would trust? Mercy on me! were we to go astray. Look around you, and see what a wild country we are in; was there ever another so fit for the haunts of a banditti? See what rocks to hide them, and what bushes to conceal them. Out upon these frightful

Palmetos, I shall never see a shrub of that sort without thinking that I would give ten dollars, aye, a hundred dollars if I had them, to be safe in Sciacca."

The Friar would have continued speaking in this manner, until he had wearied the boatmen into a compliance with his wishes, but they really did not require many arguments, so that interrupting him they declared unanimously that they would set off immediately for Sciacca; but on returning from the tower to the spot where they had left the boat, they beheld, with infinite consternation, that having in their haste neglected to make her fast, she had drifted away.

Father Leonardo was in a dreadful panic at this new misfortune, and scolded with might and main, and the master of the boat wept and tore his hair. Fortunately, however, for him, one of the sailors could swim, and who, while the Friar was talking incessantly, stripped himself, and plunging into the sea, soon regained possession of the boat. But as he was alone, he could make but slow progress towards the shore, and

the Friar lost all patience. The delay irritated him the more, because it could not be helped, and it enhanced the risk of the robbers overtaking them. Nor was this fear groundless, for Castagnello and Furbo after Alphonso had deserted them, were discovered advancing cautiously from the ruins. Father Leonardo, not being aware of the approach of other travellers, was convinced that they were coming towards him. In vain did he therefore imprecate the man in the boat to make haste, and in vain did the poor fellow exert himself to the utmost. Nothing availed. It was clear that long before the boat could reach the shore the robbers might be with them, and there seemed to be no salvation for the miserable Father Leonardo. He actually danced with despair, as he saw Castagnello and his compeer pass behind a rising ground which intercepted them from his view. One moment he flew hastily towards the door of the watch tower, in the next he came flying back. The mariners stood in a state of dumb stupidity, looking at the boat.

In this critical moment two shots were heard. Father Leonardo, screaming as if he had been wounded, and cowering, as if pursued by a robber with a drawn sword, rushed to the tower, and flying up the ladder which served as a stair to the entrance, pulled it up into the inside after him, and with the energy of a maniac, shut the door, and piled every thing against it on which he could lay hands.

This was one of the most unlucky incidents in the train of misfortunes which had yet befallen the ill-fated Friar; for in the meantime the boat reached the shore, but when the men called to him to join them, his fears interpreted the sound into dying cries and supplications to the robbers, and only served to incite his frenzy into greater activity. The men were not more courageous than himself; having waited as long as their fears would allow, they pushed off to sea, and actually sailed for Sciacca.

When some time had elapsed, and all was still without, Father Leonardo ventured to ascend the stairs which led to the roof of

the tower to reconnoiter. His first peep was towards the direction in which he had seen Castagnello and Furbo, and seeing no suspicious object in that quarter, he turned his eyes towards the sea, where, O, direful sight! he beheld the boat and her faithless crew far beyond all hail, sailing in the sunshine before the wind to Sciacca.

The heart of the disconsolate Friar sank within him. He gave himself up for lost, and, returning down stairs, threw himself on the floor, and roared and sobbed as loudly as he was able.

After indulging his grief in this manner for some time, he suddenly started up, and wiping his eyes, began to remove the articles which he had piled against the door, with nearly as much haste as he had placed them there. While he was thus busy, a hoarse voice from below, more terrible to the ears of Father Leonardo than thunder, demanded admittance. He was sensible that it was useless to affect concealment by not answering, for he was conscious that the noise he had made must have been heard,

and therefore, at the second summons, he prepared to surrender himself at discretion, and, with a trembling hand, opened the door, but did not venture to look out.

"Let down the ladder!" cried the terrible visitor; and Father Leonardo shook so much, that down fell the ladder from his palsied hold.

"God's curse!" cried the stranger; "you have murdered the mule:" and, in a flood of maledictions which followed, the Friar recognized the voice of Father Paolo, the sturdiest member of his own convent, who had been out some time on a begging excursion, and was returning to Sciacca with a cargo of miscellaneous benefactions. Father Leonardo took heart in hearing the well-known voice of Paolo, and looking down on his exasperated brother as he was assisting the mule to rise, which the ladder had struck and overturned, said, with much simplicity,

"Ah! dear Paolo is that thee?"

"Dear devil!" exclaimed Paolo. "Don't you see, accursed, that you have almost

killed poor Signora Polastro's mule, broken a jar of wine, and spoiled every thing in my baskets."

"O, Paolo! Paolo!" replied Leonardo, his thoughts reverting to the robbers. Paolo turned up the corner of his eye, and seeing who was standing at the head of the ladder, lifted his hands in devout astonishment at a meeting so unexpected, and cried, "Leonardo, Leonardo! is it the devil or Leonardo? Where hast thou been?—how camest thou there?" But Leonardo, instead of answering, hurried down the steps, and seizing the mule by the bridle, exclaimed, "Let us fly! Let us fly!" at the same time attempting to mount.

Paolo, well aware how careful Leonardo was at all times of himself, stepped forward and snatching the bridle out of his hand, rated him lustily. The other interrupted him with a brief and rapid sketch of past mishaps and present dangers, and Paolo affected to be vastly alarmed at being so near the banditti; but being loth to leave behind the gatherings of his fortnight's

ramble in the neighbourhood, urged Leonardo to assist him to collect them again into the baskets. This, however, Leonardo was little inclined to do, yet he could not well refuse as he had been the cause of the disaster; so when Paolo stooped to bring the scattered articles again together, he pretended to discover that the main mischief of the accident was owing to the girth being too slack to which the baskets were fastened. He therefore took the bridle in his teeth and began to tighten the girth; in doing this his impatience and fear over did what he intended, and the mule became restive. "Deuce take the beast," muttered Leonardo through his teeth, grinding them with vexation, as he endeavoured to fasten the girth properly: "Wilt thou not stand still?" and he gave the mule a hearty good-willed blow with his fist. The poor son of an ass, astonished at this injury, jirked up his head so suddenly that he tugged out one of the Friar's teeth. Abandoning the mule, cargo, and companion, all to the devil, Father Leonardo ran from the

spot covering his mouth with both his hands, the blood flowing through his fingers, and before he knew where he was, came full tilt against Furbo. The Friar paused in a state of mind that made him forget his pain, while the robber, staggering under the shock he had received, withered him with maledictions. Paolo, however, in a moment came to his assistance, and giving Furbo a significant look, begged him to show two honest Capuchins the way to Castel Vetrano. Furbo expressed the greatest readiness to do so, and Leonardo was surprised at the reverence with which he treated them.

As they walked along, Furbo and Paolo frequently dropped behind whispering, a kind of confabulation that Leonardo was somewhat surprised to observe; but he had great doubts if the robber was actually of the profession, when, on taking leave, after conducting them to the high way, he knelt down, and entreated Leonardo to give him his blessing.

CHAPTER XIII.

—
“ Oh, what black sin

Hath been committed by our antient house,
Whose scalding vengeance lights upon our heads,
That thus the world and fortune cast us out,
As loathed objects, Ruin's branded slaves.”

MARSTON.

THE pressure of extreme circumstances does not only concentrate the powers of reflection in the mind, but sharpens the mental sense of observation. Although the whole time that the unfortunate Countess had been with Castagnello did not exceed an hour, she had, in that short space, formed a pretty accurate conception of his character. She saw that he was a young man of dissolute habits, but that he had not lost all his original brightness, as the superiority which he preserved over his companions, notwith-

standing the state of familiar equality in which they lived, evidently showed. Fallen, as he was, from the promise of his youth, he seemed still to retain some of the feelings, if he had forfeited all the principles of the character of an officer and a gentleman. Considering the peculiarities of her situation, the Countess therefore determined to throw herself upon his generosity. But when she thought that the apparition of her husband also as his prisoner, was perhaps not a dream, her anxiety became excessive, and she sat at the window in the gallery, as if fascinated to the spot. In this crisis she heard Castagnello coming from the passage which Alphonso had taken, and seemingly in great anger. As he drew near she heard that Alphonso was with him, defending himself from some accusation with which he had been taxed, and she soon discovered that the subject of contention was herself.

“It is false, villain!” cried Castagnello, boiling with rage, “she could not escape

from the catacombs without a conductor. I know what you have done, and that you have killed her: but shew me the body; dead or alive, I will see her."

"Then you must seek her yourself," replied Alphonso, sulkily, "for I know nothing about her."

"Why did you return, traitor?" exclaimed the other; "you must have left us as we quitted the catacombs."

Alphonso made no reply to this, but glanced a look at Castagnello, which so fully explained the motive of his return, that it exasperated him still more, and made the Countess quake with abhorrence.

"Audacious slave," cried Castagnello, hoarse with rage, and laid his hand on his sword; the other, in the same moment, presented his musket; and, with the most contemptuous coolness, said,

"If you offer to strike me, I will riddle your entrails."

Castagnello turned on his heel, and in a moment after looking round, exclaimed,

"This quarrel is foolish: tell me what you have done with the woman, and let us end it."

"I know nothing of her," was the dogged reply of Alphonso; and he added, somewhat less gruffly, "It is the truth I tell you—she was not in your chamber when I returned; she must have hidden herself in some of the cells, although I have not been able to find her."

At this instant, Castagnello happened to throw his eye towards the opening, within which the Countess was standing, and she perceived by his emotion, that he had discovered her. Alphonso did not observe his surprise, and the other, from motives which he best knew himself, suddenly affected indifference, and said,

"We have had words enough about this matter; but if she is still in the catacombs we shall hear of her; in the meantime, I wish you would go in quest of Furbo. I wonder what keeps him so long."

The tone in which this was said, did not

entirely deceive Alphonso, but the request was reasonable, and he could not refuse, so, without answering, he went away. The terrified Countess, in the meantime, retired into the darkness of the gallery, in an opposite direction to that by which she had entered, but she had not advanced many paces till she heard the footsteps of Castagnello coming towards her. Forgetting in the alarm of the moment, her intention to beg his protection, she ran back, and narrowly escaped falling headlong to the bottom of the flight of steps by which she had ascended. Recovering herself, she darted forward, and crossing the central chamber, into which the passage led, she ran into the corridore, the turnings of which had enabled her before to escape from Alphonso.

As she was going forward in the dark, with her arm extended before her, she was suddenly grasped by the wrist, and before she could fetch her breath the ruffian Alphonso had carried her in his loathsome em-

brace, into another region of those terrible cells.

Among the ruins of Selinus a few goats pick a scanty subsistence, and it happened in this critical moment, that one of them while nibbling at the lank grass and weeds, which concealed on the outside the aperture, by which the light was admitted, stumbled into the opening and precipitated a quantity of loose rubbish into the cell. One of the stones struck Alphonso on the head so violently, that he unclosed the Countess from his arms, and fell staggering and stunned by the blow. At the same instant Castagnello entered, and the Countess threw herself at his feet, exclaiming,

“O save me! save me from that ruffian! my strength is gone, and unless you protect me I am lost for ever!”

Castagnello readily promised the protection she implored; he raised her gently from the ground, and conducted her back to the mausoleum where he took her first, and with more softness in his manner than he had yet shown, pressed her to take some refreshment,

assuring her, at the same time, that she might rely on his honor that not one of the villains with whom the malice of fortune obliged him to associate, would dare to harm her.

The behaviour of Castagnello was now much more circumspect; instead of the familiarity with which he formerly addressed her, he appeared desirous to conciliate her confidence by the most marked and delicate deference; he apologized for the rudeness of his first reception, intreated her to view with compassion the extremities to which he had been reduced, and insinuated that perhaps she might have it in her power to assist him to quit the bad and dangerous profession to which many misfortunes had reduced him: thus placing himself as much as possible in the situation of making her feel a wish at least to do him some favor.

But although there were occasional touches of unfeigned feeling in the expression of some of these sentiments, the Countess perceived in his eye the lurking passion which he endeavoured to conceal. She was how-

ever surprised at the external respect with which he treated her, and still more when he informed her that he believed she was the lady of Count Corneli.

"Is my husband then really also your prisoner?" cried the Countess.

"No," replied Castagnello, "but we have wounded and taken one of his servants. He has himself with the rest of his attendants escaped, and we expect, in the course of a few hours, that we must quit this place to avoid the officers of justice from Sciacca."

The Countess however was convinced that it was the Count himself whom they had taken, but she only begged to see the prisoner.

"He is weak with the loss of blood, and asleep," replied Castagnello, "and it might go hard with his life to disturb him at present, but when he awakes you shall see him."

He then informed her that one of their confederates, no other than sturdy Father Paolo, had heard that Count Corneli was to

pass that day from Trapani to Sciacca. It was to communicate this piece of intelligence, that the holy capuchin had deviated so far from the high road as to find it expedient to visit the watch-tower, and it was to acquaint him with the result of their success, that Furbo was going to the same place, when he encountered the toothless Father Leonardo. It was not indeed altogether on account of religion, that Father Paolo so often skirred the country, for the benefit and behoof of his brethren. He was a stout enterprising fellow, and under the convenient sanctity of the Friar's cloke, he found opportunities of enjoying many of the temporal pleasures of life, rendered difficult of attainment to secular profligacy.

The character of Count Corneli, as the reader must have already noticed, bore in many points a resemblance to that of Castagnello; but he was a man of large fortune, and not subjected like the other to the effects of pecuniary embarrassments. Though abandoned to his vices, he yet possessed his per-

sonal courage unimpaired, and in the conflict with the banditti obtained the respect of Castagnello for his bravery. On observing the robbers approach he prepared to defend himself, but he was severely wounded by the second shot, and his attendants seeing him fall, scampered off as fast as their horses could carry them, believing him killed. Castagnello and Furbo levelled their muskets at the fugitives to make them halt, but they escaped. At this crisis they missed Alphonso, and guessing the purpose for which he had left them, execrated his selfishness. They knew his cunning, and that he was ruled by his passions so entirely, as to make all circumstances alike till they were appeased; "He would not scruple to profane a church," said Furbo. "He would gratify himself at the foot of the gallows," exclaimed Castagnello. Both of them were willing to do so themselves amidst mouldering bones, and in the darkness and hollow of the tombs.

"For God sake help me!" cried the Count, as the two robbers were hastening

from the spot without intending to take any notice of him.

The natural humanity and soldierly habits of Castagnello, needed but little incitement to help a fallen enemy. With the assistance of Furbo he conducted him to the nearest entrance to the catacombs, for there were several, besides the one already described. Furbo however was not quite satisfied with the prudence of thus making a stranger acquainted with the secrets of their den, and remonstrated with his superior as they were moving towards the opening. The Count himself was struck with the observation, and, with admirable presence of mind, told them to pity him, for as he was only the valet of Corneli, he would probably, but for them, be left to perish on the high way.

The consideration of his being a servant allayed the apprehensions of Furbo, who had been formerly himself in that capacity, and it held out to him a hope of perhaps obtaining a companion of a more congenial temper than the sullen Alphonso.

When they entered the opening in the ground, which descended into the catacombs, Castagnello drew his sword, in case the prisoner should make any attempt to master him in the dark, and Furbo left them to go to the watch-tower where he expected to find Father Paolo, as we have already related.

CHAPTER XIV.



I think this be the land of Golgotha,
Inhabited by none but by the dead,
Except some airy shadows and they're silent.

THE THRACIAN WONDER.

THE first sentiment which arose in the breast of the Countess on hearing the condition of her husband, was nearly akin to the affection which she had so long and so patiently cherished ; it acquired redoubled energy, when she heard that he had been the preceding evening, soon after her departure, at the island of Maritimo, conceiving it possible that he might have been actuated by some contrition towards herself ; and when she thought of her infant, she could no longer suppress her anxiety to visit him. But Castagnello decidedly refused to listen to her

importunities, making humanity for the patient the pretext of his denial.

The conduct of Castagnello, however, ministered against his own designs, for it only served to make her thoughts run the more intently on the absent ; and she was several times on the point of telling her relentless keeper, that the prisoner was no other than the Count himself ; she however as often thought, that as her husband might have some good reason for keeping himself unknown, it did not become her as a wife to betray him.

But as leisure afforded her time to reflect on all that had happened, her judgment was gradually disentangled from the feelings of tenderness and affection, which had thus been renewed by so singular a train of accidents. She remembered with bitterness the neglect which she had so long endured, and sighed with grief as she thought of the unprincipled libertinism of Corneli.

This eventful day was now drawing to a close, and the Countess having other objects besides her own safety to occupy her mind,

became more at ease. The sepulchral chamber in which she was sitting, although the sun was far declined towards the horizon, seemed to her less dismal than before, and the respectfulness of Castagnello's behaviour materially diminished her distrust, especially when she reflected on the service he had rendered her, in protecting her from the brutal Alphonso ; and she saw the light fading, and the day closing without dread ; on the contrary she expressed a wish to partake of the proffered refreshment.

The robber was delighted with this change, and clapping his hands thrice, Furbo entered with a lamp lighted.

' We must retire ' said Castagnello ' to our nocturnal chamber, for in this place the light might be discovered through the opening of the roof ; ' and Furbo walked before them with the lamp as they left the room.

After several turnings they came to a flight of steps, which they descended, and entered a large circular mausoleum, decorated with fresco paintings, similar to those which are seen on etruscan vases, but the

figures were as large as the natural size. Furbo placed the lamp on the top of a black marble sarcophagus in the middle of the chamber, and which served the banditti for a table. The appearance of this subterranean temple of death would on any occasion be pronounced magnificent, to the Countess it was sublime.

Besides the door at which they entered, there were five others, opening into as many semi-circular recesses, in each of which were three niches for the reception of the dead. One of these recesses, the robbers had converted into a bed chamber, another was used as a cellar, and the rest were still unprofaned.

The Countess was so much struck with the funereal grandeur of the place, that she partook in silence of a slight repast of olives, anchovies and bread, which Furbo had placed with a pitcher of wine on the lid of the tomb. Castagnello having called for the goblet, the robber in waiting brought a silver chalice, which Alphonso had stolen from the altar of a church; Furbo crossed himself devoutly all the time with the one

hand, holding it between the fore finger and thumb of his other, as if afraid to touch it.

Castagnello snatched it briskly from him as he was in the act of placing it on the table, and filling it with wine presented it to the Countess. But she also felt a strong degree of religious abhorrence at this sacrilege, and set it down, requesting permission to drink from the pitcher ; Castagnello laughed and drained the chalice.

After a pause of a few seconds, the Countess requested Furbo to see if the prisoner still slept, and he immediately left the chamber.

When he had been absent some time, Castagnello observed that she frequently cast an anxious glance around, and guessing what was passing in her mind said, pointing to the recess, which served the robbers for a bed chamber, "That is our apartment."

The Countess misconceiving his meaning, exclaimed in a tone of alarm, "I have trusted myself to your protection, surely you do respect your own honour." The robber smiled at the mistake and replied,

“ My thoughts are better than you give me credit for ; I only meant that in yon recess Alphonso, Furbo, and myself usually sleep, but any of the others that you may choose I will myself prepare for you, and watch you from insult here.”

This declaration quieted her fear ; but she would have preferred an apartment more distant, her dread however of the dismal genius of the place, and the horror of her apprehensions of Alphonso, overcame her reluctance.

There is something undoubtedly in the presence of a number of witnesses, which represses the evil inclinations of the human heart. Conspiracies requiring more than two persons are often long in being formed, and are brought to maturity with difficulty ; but the deeds of one criminal are always speedy, and where no more than two act together, the one commonly submits to the will of the other. The Countess preferred to pass the night in the same chamber with the three robbers, to the risk of being disturbed by the detestable Alphonso.

After a short interval Castagnello said he had a cloke, which might be hung up as a screen to the door of her recess. There was so much delicacy implied in this, and the tone in which it was expressed was so chaste, that she thanked him gratefully. The better feelings were not entirely extinguished in the breast of this dissolute young man, and he was softened to a sense of his own degradation, when he saw that his unfortunate prisoner really confided in his promised protection.

He rose from his seat, and taking the lamp, examined each of the three unappropriated recesses. Having fixed on that which appeared to be least tainted with damp, he told the Countess he would make her bed in it, and immediately with his one hand, holding the lamp in the other, he began to clean the hollow of one of the niches. This attracted the attention of the Countess, and the idea flashing across her mind that he was removing the relics of the dead, raised her suddenly to examine the place herself; on approaching which, she saw in a handful

of rubbish, which he was in the act of throwing down, several pieces of human bone. Shuddering with terror and disgust at the sight, she seized him by the hand, and holding it to the light which he held in the other, fainted, and fell at his feet.

CHAPTER XV.



Great man,

Ev'ry sin thou commit'st shows, like a flame
Upon a mountain; 'tis seen far about;
And with a big wind made of popular breath,
The sparkles fly through cities; here one takes,
Another catches there, and in short time
Waste all to cinders; but remember still
What burnt the vallies first, came from the hill.

T. MIDDLETON.

It is now necessary to account for the unexpected appearance of Count Corneli. On quitting the Ægæan islands, he took his passage, as the Countess was informed by the sailor, in a vessel bound from Trapani to Leghorn, but which calms and contrary winds obliged to put into Volcano, one of the Lipari islands. Here he remained in a cottage unknown several weeks, having quitted the vessel determined to return secretly to Palermo, in order to make pecu-

niary arrangements for a permanent residence abroad. In the mean time, the Viceroy, more deeply affected by the disgrace of his lady than it is alleged Sicilian husbands commonly feel on such occasions, had tendered his resignation to the Court of Naples, and another nobleman was appointed in his stead.

When Corneli heard this, with the celebrity by which all his movements were characterised, he embarked in the boat that brought this intelligence from Melazze; and as it was impossible to travel with the nurse and child so expeditiously as he wished, he left them in that town, and hastened on to the capital.

His original intention was to make arrangements for going abroad, but the dissipation of that gay and idle metropolis soon altered his purpose, and he engaged in them anew with refreshed ardour. But enquiries were made respecting his lady, which, after parrying as well as he could for some time, he was obliged, in consequence of a peremptory letter from her bro-

ther, the philosophical Baron Alcamo, to think it necessary to show her again to the world, hoping, however, that by this time she would have resolved to take the veil, the best of all the Sicilian methods of divorcing husbands. But, conscious of the wrong which he had done her, and alarmed lest the public should hear of the shameful manner in which he had deserted her, he resolved, on receiving her brother's letter, to go himself to the convent, where he expected still to find her. She had, however, as we have stated, sailed for Sciacca about an hour before his arrival; and, owing to the signs of a storm which the setting sun that evening presented, the boatmen, with whom he came from Trapani, would not follow her, but only return home. At Trapani he procured horses, and set out by land.

Benvolio, the person whom he hired to be his guide to Sciacca, was one of Father Paolo's friends, and an ally of the robbers, though not a regular sharer in their booty. On arriving at Mazzara where it was necessary to allow the horses to rest some time, Benvolio

met with Paolo, and acquainted him with the rank of his charge, and the road they intended to take. The worthy Friar immediately mounting his mule, set forward expeditiously to apprise Castagnello and his companions, and the result has been related.

When the Count had been conducted into a chamber in the catacombs, and his wounds dressed, Alphonso, who had received a severe contusion in the head, came soon after into his apartment, and stretching himself on the ground near him, growled like a beaten bull dog. He had never been well satisfied with Castagnello, and the contention respecting the Countess ruptured the slender tie of alliance which connected them ; so that when Furbo, who was also in the room, was summoned by the wonted signal of clapping the hands to attend Castagnello, this treacherous ruffian raised himself on his elbow, and proposed to assist the Count to quit the catacombs if he would procure him a place as a servant, believing the prisoner to be of that class.

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figures were as large as the natural size. Furbo placed the lamp on the top of a black marble sarcophagus in the middle of the chamber, and which served the banditti for a table. The appearance of this subterranean temple of death would on any occasion be pronounced magnificent, to the Countess it was sublime.

Besides the door at which they entered, there were five others, opening into as many semi-circular recesses, in each of which were three niches for the reception of the dead. One of these recesses, the robbers had converted into a bed chamber, another was used as a cellar, and the rest were still unprofaned.

The Countess was so much struck with the funereal grandeur of the place, that she partook in silence of a slight repast of olives, anchovies and bread, which Furbo had placed with a pitcher of wine on the lid of the tomb. Castagnello having called for the goblet, the robber in waiting brought a silver chalice, which Alphonso had stolen from the altar of a church; Furbo crossed himself devoutly all the time with the one

hand, holding it between the fore finger and thumb of his other, as if afraid to touch it.

Castagnello snatched it briskly from him as he was in the act of placing it on the table, and filling it with wine presented it to the Countess. But she also felt a strong degree of religious abhorrence at this sacrilege, and set it down, requesting permission to drink from the pitcher; Castagnello laughed and drained the chalice.

After a pause of a few seconds, the Countess requested Furbo to see if the prisoner still slept, and he immediately left the chamber.

When he had been absent some time, Castagnello observed that she frequently cast an anxious glance around, and guessing what was passing in her mind said, pointing to the recess, which served the robbers for a bed chamber, "That is our apartment."

The Countess misconceiving his meaning, exclaimed in a tone of alarm, "I have trusted myself to your protection, surely you do respect your own honour." The robber smiled at the mistake and replied,

“ My thoughts are better than you give me credit for ; I only meant that in yon recess Alphonso, Furbo, and myself usually sleep, but any of the others that you may choose I will myself prepare for you, and watch you from insult here.”

This declaration quieted her fear ; but she would have preferred an apartment more distant, her dread however of the dismal genius of the place, and the horror of her apprehensions of Alphonso, overcame her reluctance.

There is something undoubtedly in the presence of a number of witnesses, which represses the evil inclinations of the human heart. Conspiracies requiring more than two persons are often long in being formed, and are brought to maturity with difficulty ; but the deeds of one criminal are always speedy, and where no more than two act together, the one commonly submits to the will of the other. The Countess preferred to pass the night in the same chamber with the three robbers, to the risk of being disturbed by the detestable Alphonso.

After a short interval Castagnello said he had a cloke, which might be hung up as a screen to the door of her recess. There was so much delicacy implied in this, and the tone in which it was expressed was so chaste, that she thanked him gratefully. The better feelings were not entirely extinguished in the breast of this dissolute young man, and he was softened to a sense of his own degradation, when he saw that his unfortunate prisoner really confided in his promised protection.

He rose from his seat, and taking the lamp, examined each of the three unappropriated recesses. Having fixed on that which appeared to be least tainted with damp, he told the Countess he would make her bed in it, and immediately with his one hand, holding the lamp in the other, he began to clean the hollow of one of the niches. This attracted the attention of the Countess, and the idea flashing across her mind that he was removing the relics of the dead, raised her suddenly to examine the place herself; on approaching which, she saw in a handful

and my tongue will not stay out of the gap. But, alas! the Countess! what shall I say to the worthy Abbess, her aunt, for not bringing her with me? As for those perfidious infidels, the boatmen, who ought to be shot for cowards, they are, no doubt, safe at Sciacca by this time, and have spread the story far and wide."

"Let them answer for themselves," said Paolo; "but I do think it will not be prudent of you to make any noise about the business at Castel Vetrano. Suppose the men were truly robbers, are not you obliged to go home to Sciacca, and might they not, if you were the cause of any trouble to them, way-lay you and cut your throat?"

The blood of Leonardo ran cold at this expression, which he thought the most shocking he had ever heard uttered.

"But even were you to escape their vengeance at this time," continued Paolo, "men of their stamp never forgive or forget injuries, and years hence they would wreak a terrible revenge."

CHAPTER XV.



Great man,

Ev'ry sin thou commit'st shows, like a flame
Upon a mountain; 'tis seen far about;
And with a big wind made of popular breath,
The sparkles fly through cities; here one takes,
Another catches there, and in short time
Waste all to cinders; but remember still
What burnt the vallies first, came from the hill.

T. MIDDLETON.

IT is now necessary to account for the unexpected appearance of Count Corneli. On quitting the Ægadean islands, he took his passage, as the Countess was informed by the sailor, in a vessel bound from Trapani to Leghorn, but which calms and contrary winds obliged to put into Volcano, one of the Lipari islands. Here he remained in a cottage unknown several weeks, having quitted the vessel determined to return secretly to Palermo, in order to make pecu-

niary arrangements for a permanent residence abroad. In the mean time, the Viceroy, more deeply affected by the disgrace of his lady than it is alleged Sicilian husbands commonly feel on such occasions, had tendered his resignation to the Court of Naples, and another nobleman was appointed in his stead.

When Corneli heard this, with the celerity by which all his movements were characterised, he embarked in the boat that brought this intelligence from Melazzo; and as it was impossible to travel with the nurse and child so expeditiously as he wished, he left them in that town, and hastened on to the capital.

His original intention was to make arrangements for going abroad, but the dissipations of that gay and idle metropolis soon altered his purpose, and he engaged in them anew with refreshed ardour. But enquiries were made respecting his lady, which, after parrying as well as he could for some time, he was obliged, in consequence of a peremptory letter from her bro-

upon his fears, but the idea of being suspected cowed his own courage, and made him for some time stand in awe of the same individual, whom a few minutes before he scarcely seemed to consider as possessed of common sense. But there was a solid and substantial mass of hardihood in the character of Paolo not easily mastered, and he was soon able to think of some expedient to suspend the garrulity of Leonardo. By this time, however, they were nigh the town, and the valour of Leonardo gathered strength as they approached it.

“I doubt, I doubt, Paolo,” said he, “that you find more pleasure in roving over the country, than in attending mass. When I was a novice, there was one Father Giovanni in the convent, wonderfully active like you. Every body knew him, and nobody was louder in his praise than old blind Urbano, our worthy superior, for he brought such cargoes of alms to the monastery. We indeed lived on clover; no monks in the island fared half so well. The benedictines of Catania would have smacked

their lips after our wine, and all was owing to Giovanni. But what do you think, Paolo? this angel of many mercies, that went here and there, and every where, just like you, all for the good of the convent, had the cloven foot. It was discovered that he was in league with a gang of robbers, and that scarcely a woman in the whole country side durst say in his presence that she was any better than she should be. So Giovanni was taken and hanged; I would therefore say to you in time, Beware, beware, beware."

Leonardo, to give the more emphasis to the moral of his tale, repeated the warning word with great solemnity, looking closer and closer into the face of Paolo, who, with the most sovereign equanimity, gave him such a stroke on the side of the head that he reeled across the road, and paused aghast, almost persuaded that he saw dreadful horns issuing from beneath the cowl of his tremendous companion. "Come on, you silly fool," cried Paolo, and Leonardo came sneaking behind him to the Locando, an inn, where they were to pass the night, there being no convent of their order in the town.

This hostellerie was a shed within the quadrangle of a ruinous monastery, which belonged to the Jesuits, and the landlord, an acquaintance of Paolo, was just such a Saracen-headed fellow as the imagination of Leonardo considered a fit associate of blood-thirsty banditti. "Mercy on me!" said the afflicted capuchin to himself, as he looked at Bernardo, the landlord, whom he thought the most horrid monster he had ever beheld. "Mercy on me! this is out of the frying pan into the fire," and the justness of this mental ejaculation was confirmed when Paolo said, "Bernardo, keep a sharp eye on this man; I have my reasons for't:" and leading the mule into one of the cells which served as a stable, he unloaded its burden.

Leonardo sat disconsolately down on a stone, and awaited in a state of stupid resignation, some new misfortune which he thought must certainly ensue, not daring to lift his eye towards the hideous Bernardo, who was leaning with his back against a letica, with one hand in his breeches pocket, and the other in his bosom, smoking a segar.

On his head he wore a dirty cotton night-cap, and round his waist a piece of cheque as a sash. His beard was long and black, and his breast, which was bare, seemed to the desponding Friar, as shaggy, rough, and remorseless as the bosom of a wolf or a wild boar.

When Paolo had unloaded the mule, he came out of the stable, and renewing his request to Bernardo, went without saying a word, directly to the Prefect of the town, and told him that he was necessitated to implore his assistance in a most mysterious affair. "One of the Friars of our convent, a sturdy rascal, of the name of Leonardo, was found by me in a very particular situation near the ruins of Selinus, where a young woman of great beauty, who was also seen there this morning, has disappeared, and I fear he has committed some dreadful outrage. The reprobate himself is now with that honest man Bernardo, the Locandieré, and I beg your worship to investigate this bloody business."

Signor Corbo, the Prefect, was one of

those personages, who have a mighty notion of the importance of office, and especially of magisterial dignity, and he conceived that power was never so wisely administered but in proportion as it was done promptly. Having been once deputed to the capital to obtain the modification of a local tax, in which the members of government took no other interest than as it was productive, they, at his suggestion, changed it to another, but levied both the original tax and the new one next year. This mission, with the official civility that he had met with, turned the head of Signor Corbo, and he fancied himself from that time, qualified to be a minister of state ; so that when he returned home, he conducted himself in a manner perfectly suitable to this high conceit, making fine speeches that made himself very ridiculous.

But, although the morals of the inhabitants of Castel Vetrano, are not a whit better than of those of any other Sicilian town, it happened that no cause of any importance had come before Signor Corbo subsequent to

his return ; he was not therefore ill pleased to find that one so heinous in its complexion was likely to afford him an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with the minister of the interior. This led him at once to comply with Paolo's request, and to send a police officer to bring the unfortunate Leonardo, instantly before him.

When the officer entered the cloister of the Jesuit's convent, Bernardo was making an unsuccessful attempt to enter into conversation with Leonardo, but at the sight of the officer, he fled from him with an ejaculation of terror, which so startled the afflicted Friar, that the fang of the law had him instantly by the neck, believing he intended to escape. Leonardo fell on his knees, and entreated mercy and compassion without knowing why. This only served to convince the officer of his delinquency, and he dragged him along in consequence with the less ceremony.

Paolo, who had recourse to this stratagem only to gain time, on quitting the house of

the magistrate, went to one of his confederates, a fellow who was commonly employed by travellers as a guide and guard, and dispatched him to Selinus to ascertain what had really happened to the lady, and to beg the robbers to release her, and send her as well as the Count, safe to Castel Vetrano, in order to prevent any stir from being made in the business; and, as it is not the general custom in Sicily to confront the accused and accusers, he thought it better to go to vespers than to return to the magistrates, where Leonardo was taken, followed by a numerous retinue of the rabble.

The Prefect, on seeing the crowd approaching, ordered as many to be admitted, as his saloon could hold, and retired to an inner chamber, where his clerk or secretary was sitting paring his nails, having previously mended his pen, preparatory to the important investigation.

At the upper end of the saloon, into which the officer dragged the innocent capuchin,

stood a large marble table, with an inkstand and a brazen lamp on it, at the one end was a chair of state, behind which, and under a canopy, hung the portraits of their Sicilian Majesties, under the right hand side of the table a rush bottomed chair was placed for the secretary.

When the crowd had waited some time, a servant entered and lighted the lamp, a chamber bell was then heard to ring, and another domestic came from the inner apartment waving his hand as a signal for silence. He was followed by the secretary with a pen, and two or three sheets of paper in his hand ; then came the grand personage himself, with an easy negligent air, which was the more remarkable, as it seemed to be put on for the occasion. It is not customary for provincial magistrates of Sicily, any more than those of other countries, to affect this pompous negligence, but Signor Corbo had experienced the grandeur of its effect in the hollow familiarity of his intercourse with the great of Palermo.

When Signor Corbo had taken his seat

in the chair of state, he threw a glance of supreme discernment at the prisoner, and over the multitude, and turning to the secretary, said with a significant smile, drawing his hand over his mouth, 'A bad countenance,' and in the same breath raising his voice and looking from under his brows, he addressed the prisoner,

"Well, friend, what have you got to say for yourself?"

Father Leonardo, not understanding the import of the question, answered timidly, "Nothing."

'Nothing!' echoed Signor Corbo chuckling—and the clerk recorded the word, "that is worse than I expected. Do you know why you have been brought here?"

"That man brought me," replied Leonardo, with sincere simplicity, pointing to the police officer.

"A deep rogue," was the sapient remark of Signor Corbo to his secretary, but in a careless confidential manner, and lifting his voice into an oratorical swell, he addressed the astonished Friar to the following effect:

“ Information friend has been given to us, that you have been acting under circumstances of a most equivocal kind, in which a woman was most deeply interested, and respecting whose suspicious non-appearance we intend to proceed, to a most strict and satisfactory investigation. It is enough to make the blood boil in every honest man's veins, to think, how, under that cloak of sanctity, you should have carried your unfortunate victim to a desolate and sequestered spot. But I would put the most favorable construction on every fact conducive to your acquittal, were I not constrained by a sense of public duty, in which I trust my townsmen will never find me wanting, to see many indicatory presumptions pointing not only to a crime of the deepest dye, but to murder itself. It is therefore with infinite concern that I am obliged to commit you to prison, until this affair is placed in a more luminous point of view. Officers, you will take him to prison, and my secretary will prepare the necessary document for you in the evening.”

Signor Corbo then rose and bowed to the audience, who testified their, approbation of this Ciceronian farrago, by shouting Viva, viva il Signor Corbo ! He then moved with a triumphant stride from his lofty seat, but suddenly checking himself he turned round to the clerk and said, " You will acquaint my colleague Signor Pavietto with this, and tell him that I have had highly satisfactory letters relative to Rosalia, my eldest daughter, who has made a promising beginning on her second sampler, a proficiency which the Abbess assures me is of the most flattering kind ;' and so saying he hastily retired into the inner room, charmed with the wisdom and dignity of his jurisprudence. Poor Leonardo was in the same moment led away and lodged in prison.

In the mean time the pious Poulo had returned to Bernardo's, and pleased with the success of his stratagem, sat down to a plentiful supper, which he catered from his own basket. Being naturally good humoured, though a profligate fellow, by the time he had finished his meal, the quality and quantity

of the wine he drank extinguished all the grudge he owed his unfortunate companion, and he resolved to carry him something to eat.

It was now dark, and Leonardo had recovered the use of his faculties, and was anxious that some person might come to him to hear the facts of the story, when Paolo made his appearance at the grated window of his cell. "O Paolo!" exclaimed the prisoner, "behold what has happened! they have made me an hostage for the appearance of the Countess."

"Thou shouldst have been more prudent, and taken my advice," replied Paolo, "but I have brought thee some excellent wine, and the breast of a chicken as plump as the bosom of Signora Polostra, whose mule thou hadst almost put to death."

"But," said Leonardo, "they accuse me of rape and murder, and you know Paolo that I am as innocent of these sins as the child unborn?"

"How do I know that?" said the rogue jocularly, "I have only thine own word

for't—and Leonardo how can I tell if there be a word of truth in all thy story about the Countess and the robbers. But come, be of good heart, pick that bone, and taste this wine, it will put life into thy withered heart, and enable thee to meet thy fate with courage."

"Ah, what do you think will be my fate, Paolo?"

The officer who arrested Leonardo had noticed Paolo approaching the window of the prison, and slipping gradually along the wall nearer and nearer, overheard enough of their conversation to justify him in seizing Paolo as an accomplice, which he did at this point of their discourse. But instead of falling on his knees, and beseeching mercy like the innocent Leonardo, conscious guilt animated the courage of Paolo and he struggled manfully with the officer. Having the pitcher of wine in his hand, he endeavoured to break it on the officer's head, but the handle gave way, and it flew like a bomb shell against the window, where Leonardo was standing, and was broken to pieces

on the grating in such a manner, that the whole contents dashed in the ill-fated capuchin's face. Leonardo yelled so wildly, that the officer thought he was killed, and grasping Paolo with redoubled energy, got the key into the lock, opened the door, dragged him into the cell, in less time than we have taken to tell the particulars, where finding that Leonardo was more frightened than hurt, he locked them both up, and went to inform Signor Corbo of what had happened.

CHAPTER XVII.

Though all my hours be doom'd to chains and darkness,
The pleasing thought that I have given thee safety,
Will cheer me more than liberty and day-light.

GAY.

THE guide and servants of Count Corneli, those who deserted him in the conflict with the robbers, had in the meantime arrived at Sciacca, and proclaimed his murder, with many circumstances highly honorable to their own valour and prowess. The boat had also reached the town, and the story of the boatmen respecting the Countess was still more terrible, and not less to their advantage as valiant men.

Such atrocious transactions filled the whole city with horror, and when it was understood that the Countess was alive, and

still in the hands of the robbers, a party of young men volunteered to attempt her rescue.

At break of day, they set off for the ruins of Selinus, and when they reached the spot, where they expected to find the body of the Count, they traced from thence by his blood the track by which he had been conducted to the catacombs; but being unprovided with lights to explore them, they could proceed no further. Two however were immediately dispatched to Castel Vetrano for torches, and the rest of the party sat down to wait their return, and to watch in case of any of the robbers appearing at the mouth of the hole.

Furbo, who had been abroad, seeing as he returned this band of armed youths, guessed their object, and approached them with a timid and respectful air, and before any of them could enquire what he was, said, "He was happy to inform them, that a priest who had been concerned in the bloody robbery, was taken and lodged in prison, at Castel Vetrano." This was suggested by the infor-

mation which he had received from Paolo's messenger ; and he added, " I was told last night that the Count is not dead, but being found by two honest men on the road, has been taken by them to their house, and it is hoped his wounds will not prove mortal."

" But what has become of the Countess?" cried all the volunteers at once.

" I don't know," replied Furbo, with an unchanging tranquillity of countenance, " nor did I understand that she was with the Count."

The youths then told him her story, as it had been reported by the boatmen, and the robber observed with simplicity, that she had fallen into very bad hands, but that Providence had often worked great miracles, and was able to deliver her.

While they were thus conversing, the Countess herself was seen rushing from the opening between the two pillars, and in a moment after Alphonso also appeared, followed by Castagnello, with his sword drawn. The volunteers immediately cocked their muskets and ran towards them ; Furbo in

the same moment dived into the catacombs, conscious that the discovery of his true character was now inevitable, and that his only chance of escape was in his knowledge of the labyrinth.

Before the young men were within shot of the robbers, Castagnello, seeing them coming, uttered a wild cry, and making a desperate cut at Alphonso with his sabre, the ruffian fell, and he leaped into the vault to seek refuge likewise in the catacombs.

The Countess, after having run with great speed to the distance of two or three hundred yards, stopped and looked back, wringing her hands aloft, and exhibiting all the symptoms of the most frantic despair. Two of the young men hastened towards her, but before they were near enough to render her any assistance, she sunk, and was lying on the ground exhausted when they came up; meanwhile those who had gone to Alphonso, found him weltering in his blood, and his bowels protruding from a terrible wound, which he had received from Castagnello.

He glanced at them furiously as they bent

over him, hesitating what they ought to do. One of them, a barber lad, who was also a surgeon, the two professions being still united in Sicily, and who had come prepared to dress any wounds they might receive, examined Alphonso's.

"Is it mortal think you?" said the robber. The skill of the doctor, however, could not answer that question, but he replied hopefully, as the faculty generally do in all doubtful cases. "Then if it is not, I will make it so," cried Alphonso, and with a horrible grasp he tore out his own entrails.

The terrified youths recoiled with a howl of horror and disgust, and when they returned he was dead. One of the two who had gone to the Countess, came to request the assistance of the surgeon, and the whole of them forgetting Castagnello, who had disappeared so close to the spot where the body lay, hastened to where the unfortunate lady was supported by their companion.

As they were standing round her, Castagnello was seen advancing from the open-

ing, and they all left her to attack him. But he came towards them with such a free intrepid demeanour that they halted and looked at him in doubt what to do. He passed on without heeding, and walked straight to where the Countess sat on the ground.

The youths, as they drew near, enquired if it was true that the Count was alive.

"He is a villain, and should be in hell," exclaimed Castagnello, "but let us not lose time in vain regrets. This unfortunate lady must be taken to some place of safety. Where have you come from?"

They answered from Sciacca, and would willingly assist to carry her there, but that they could not leave the spot till their companions came from Castel Vetrano, where they had gone for torches to explore the catacombs.

"I do not think," replied Castagnello with great presence of mind, "that it is now of any use to search the catacombs, for the band of robbers is broken up. But if you must wait for the return of your friends,

lend me one of your horses and I will conduct the Countess myself to Sciacca. Each of the young men readily offered his horse, and Castagnello made choice of the best, placing the Countess, who seemed still insensible to all that passed, on the saddle before him. The youths admired the nobleness of his air, as he vaulted into the saddle and rode away, and could not persuade themselves that he was one of the robbers; indeed, such was the favourable impression he had produced on their minds, that they took afterwards a great and friendly interest in his fate. But it is time we should give some account of his previous adventures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Whilst I am here on earth let me be cloy'd
With all things that delight the heart of man :
My four and twenty years of liberty,
I'll spend in pleasure and in dalliance.

MARLOWE.

It is the nature of vice to propagate itself, and the history of Castagnello affords a melancholy example of the effects of hereditary profligacy. The youth of ample fortune, in the career of dissolute indulgence, impairs only his health or his patrimony, and may, after a violent course of dissipation, redeem his manhood to an honorable place in society ; but the young man who, without such recourses, gives way to the same promptings of passion, will be driven to fraudulent expedients for pecuniary means, and consequently, whatever may be his natural endowments or the aspirations of his contrition, he must necessarily sink deeper and deeper in depravity. There is no hope

for him; he provokes the ill-will of the world against him, and the invidious spirit of his cotemporaries is secretly gratified by the progress of his degradation.

Castagnello was the son of a celebrated actress at Naples, and an English nobleman, who had the credit of being his father, made a respectable provision for his future prospects in life. The professional duties of his mother, and the necessity she was under to preserve the symmetry of her beautiful form, prevented her from nursing him, and he was in consequence committed, soon after his birth, to the care of a peasant's wife in the neighbourhood. As he was a very fine child, his foster-mother became much attached to him; she was, however, about four months after receiving him, tempted by an offer from the Duchess Del Fuocco to nurse her daughter. Reluctant to resign Castagnello, and at the same time desirous to reap the advantages of her Grace's offer, she hesitated till the Duchess, a dissipated woman, who disliked the trouble of children, consented to allow her to take the infant home.

The son of the actress and the daughter of the Duchess were thus nursed together, and an affection arose between them that deeply coloured with misery the events of their future lives. Bellina, at the end of twelve months, was removed to the palace of her father, but Castagnello was allowed to remain with the nurse, who, as often as she went to see her foster-daughter, carried the little boy with her, and the children were allowed to play together as brother and sister.

This continued several years, and in the mean time the mother of Castagnello, still in the zenith of her fame and the noon of her beauty, had borne several other children. But at length newer faces and younger talents of the same kind, if not of the same excellence, shared with her the admiration and applause which she had long exclusively enjoyed. She had, however, realized a considerable fortune, and being sensible of the decline in her popularity, she resolved to retire from the stage. Accordingly she made proposals of marriage to a handsome young

musician belonging to the opera house, by whom they were readily accepted, and having purchased a villa in the vicinity of the city, she became an honest woman, and really, in point of decorum, as respectable a wife as could reasonably be expected.

Her children, consisting of two daughters and a son, besides Castagnello, were educated in a style calculated certainly for show and effect, but sufficiently solid, had their accomplishments been grounded on proper morals, to have made them true ornaments to society. As it was, the daughters became distinguished public singers at London and Paris, and the brother of Castagnello went to England with a nobleman and participated in the distribution of those places and pensions which the British government so liberally bestows to encourage foreigners to settle among us, it being well known that no nation can improve itself without having alien assistance.

Castagnello was in his seventh year when he was taken home on the marriage of his mother, and placed under the care of the

masters who attended her other children. His proficiency in learning, however, was not equal to theirs, although he was not inferior in capacity; for he was playful and borne away by the liveliness of his animal spirits.

He had also another fatal temptation. His singular beauty had attracted the notice of Bellina's mother, and her Grace was so pleased at the delight which his company gave to her daughter, that she frequently sent for him to spend the day at her mansion. This sacrifice of the precious time of youth, in which all that is valuable to the man must be acquired, would have grieved any judicious parents. But his mother and her husband, accustomed to regard the patronage of the great as the prime good of life, considered him highly fortunate to have obtained so early a connection so flattering.

Thus unimpressed with any respect for the most delicate of the domestic virtues, acquiring at the same time a taste for the enjoyments of the higher classes, without

receiving the education requisite to better his condition, Castagnello grew up to manhood. The Duke Del Fuocco, the father of Bellina, although much engaged in those frivolous affairs to which the government of Naples at that time attached as much importance as the cabinets of Versailles or St. James's did to their more calamitous intrigues, had seen with some uneasiness the frequent visits of Castagnello to his daughter, and remonstrated with the Duchess for allowing it so long. Her Grace, whose main virtue was the pride of rank, became alarmed at her own imprudence, and anxious that no time should be lost in repairing the evil. But the Duke, accustomed to view every thing with the sapience of a statesman, and being at all times fonder of attaining his object by address than by direct proceedings, thought it expedient in this business to proceed with the utmost wariness. "It is not only necessary," said he to the Duchess, "to effect a separation, but to do it in such a manner as to give the young people no suspicion of our apprehensions;

and it is also necessary to render the separation final if possible. Lastly, we must procure a fit match for our dear daughter."

But the Duke Del Fuocco, although devoted to diplomatic modes of business, was naturally a man of some talent for practical affairs; having determined on the expediency of ending for ever the intercourse which had existed too long between his daughter and Castagnello, he lost no time in carrying his purpose into effect. On leaving the Duchess, he went to his closet and wrote a letter to Cardinal Albano, respecting several antique gems, which had been found among the ruins of Herculanium, and which he enclosed in a packet to be examined by his Eminence, who was at that time the most celebrated virtuoso in Italy, particularly in that class of art. In a postscript to this letter, he begged the Cardinal's hospitality for the bearer, in whose welfare he was not only deeply interested, but pledged to promote his fortune.

Having finished this adroit epistle, his

Grace sent for Castagnello, and on his entering the closet, he addressed him to the following effect, sealing the packet at the same time.

“ My dear Castagnello, I have had often occasion to admire your ability and address, and having some private confidential business to transact, with a distinguished member of the papal court, it would confer on me an immense obligation, if you would immediately set out for Rome, and deliver this packet into the hands of Cardinal Albano. The excursion I have no doubt will prove agreeable to a young man of your taste, and you may spend a week or two highly to your satisfaction and advantage.”

Castagnello was delighted with the mission, and flattered by the confidence which his Grace reposed in him. His mother and her husband also anticipated great things from so decisive a beginning, and he set off the same evening, followed by the acclamations of all his friends.

On arriving at “the eternal city,” he went straight to the palace of the Cardinal,

and delivered the packet into his own hands. The Cardinal, it is well known, had been for many years quite blind, and as it was necessary that his secretary should read to him all his letters, he requested Castagnello to withdraw, until he had perused the despatches.

A present of gems from the ruins of Herculanium, was a matter of infinite importance to Cardinal Albano; when the secretary had read the letter, he therefore gave orders to his household to pay every attention to the young friend of the Duke Del Fuocco, and that on no account was he himself to be disturbed during the remainder of the day. The package containing the antiquities was then opened, and with his secretary to note down his observations on them severally, he remained in his cabinet till after midnight.

Castagnello would probably have considered himself treated with contempt had he known the frivolous nature of his mission, for he was too young to reflect that the

toys of antiquarians and children differ but in their age; so that when he found himself treated with great distinction, as the friend of the Duke Del Fuocco, by the domestics, and the Cardinal shut up with his secretary, deliberating on the confidential despatches of which he had been the bearer, he thought himself in the fair way to preferment, and the natural hilarity of his spirits sparkled to overflowing.

One of the cardinal's nephews, a dissipated young nobleman, but possessed of many companionable qualities, called on Castagnello, and finding him a handsome young man, full of sprightliness, and moreover highly accomplished in those shallow attainments which make the greatest glitter in company, just as plating and gilding occupy a larger space in the eye than solid bullion, he carried him to several of the gayest assemblies in the city.

Although Castagnello was a frequent inmate of the Duke Del Fuocco's, his mother was too well known at Naples to render him a fit guest for the public parties of the

Duchess, and at home he saw but little general company, so that hitherto he had been kept free from the contagion of profligate companions even in that city, the most dissipated in all Europe. But to a youth of his temperament and lax education, the ecclesiastical capital was even more dangerous than Naples. For such was the fatal external decorum maintained there, that the natural bashfulness and sense of shame which it is the aim of all judicious education to fortify into chaste and modest principles, was seldom offended though constantly assailed. To speak aphoristically, Sin, as described by Milton, in Rome wears a petticoat, and Castagnello was cajoled into her embrace by the alluring beauty of her face and bosom. His constitutional ardour was excited by indulgence, and his career in vice was so rapid that all his ambition was forgotten in the whirl of dissipation.

In the meantime Cardinal Albano having examined the gems, had prepared an elaborate account of them for the Duke, which he was on the eve of sending, when fresh

déspatches arrived from Naples. His Grace had been regularly informed of the proceedings of Castagnello, by one of the Neapolitan emissaries, to whom he had written to observe him carefully, and who had in consequence found means to ingratiate himself so completely into his confidence, that he became at once necessary and accessary to all the errors of that unfortunate young man. Of the rapid derilections of Castagnello, the Duke heard with indifference, or if he had any feeling on the subject it was not far removed from satisfaction. But he considered himself as embarked in a serious undertaking, in which all his political wisdom was laid under contribution, and he was decidedly of opinion that a great statesman should advance to the accomplishment of his purposes undeterred and undaunted by any change of circumstances, applying the general principle of Horace to affairs that only related to one individual; but this was in character with the business of the court of Naples at that time, where talents and genius that in a more noble

field of action would have been found equal to those of any other statesmen in Europe, were wasted on local and petty details, with as much earnestness as if they had been affecting the concerns of empires and the destinies of mankind. Men of more or of less understanding than the Duke Del Fuocco, would, on hearing of the misconduct of so fine a young man as Castagnello, either have tried to arrest his infatuation, or have allowed him to go to the devil his own way. But his Grace had formed a plan, and was determined to carry it into effect; and in doing so, had taken a vast deal of trouble to procure for his protégé a commission in the Austrian service. This commission was contained in the despatches alluded to.

Had Castagnello thought when he left Naples that he was to be parted for ever from his beautiful foster-sister, it is probable that he would have hesitated, at least, it seems natural to think that had he not calculated on soon returning home, some sense of regret and tenderness would have prevented

him from engaging with so much sprightliness in the licentious decorum of Rome. But he went with the high health and spirits of a school boy to enjoy his holidays, and yielded to the temptations of the place, with the avidity with which the other partakes of the sweets and treats of his aunts and grandmother.

The commission came in a moment of spleen arising from temporary satiety, and although he wished that he could have seen Bellina before going to Germany, the state of his mind at the time did not allow the wish to grow into desire, and as he was urged to join the army immediately, he left Rome the following day.

The seven years war was then raging in all its fury, and the approach of the Russians towards the Brandenburg territory, had obliged the King of Prussia to abandon the siege of Olmutz, and advance against them. About the time that Frederic had repulsed these barbarians, and was returning to defend Saxony, Castagnello left Rome, and reached the camp of Marshal

Daun on the evening before the battle in which that General compelled Frederic to retreat, after losing Marshal Keith and Prince Francis of Brunswick, with upwards of seven thousand no less gallant soldiers. The young Neopolitan having commendatory letters from the imperial minister at Naples, was received by the Commander in Chief with marked distinction, and invited to sup with him. While they were at table, an officer brought in a note to the Field Marshal, who, after reading it thoughtfully, ordered the troops to be put in motion, and turning to Castagnello and several young Austrian noblemen who were in company, and who had also but just recently joined the army, said, "Gentlemen, we shall have hot work to-morrow, for I expect to be engaged before day-light; you must therefore make haste with your supper." The Austrians, brave enough at bottom, were rather disconcerted, and seemed little disposed to eat any more, but Castagnello, who had just filled his glass with wine, drank, with his usual gaiety,

success to their arms. The etiquettes of the Count's table did not allow of such familiarities; but the contrast between his ease and the anxiety of the other young officers, not only procured his pardon in the mind of the Field Marshal, but left an impression in his favour, which his conduct in the field next morning confirmed so highly, that Daun, in afterwards acknowledging receipt of the minister's letters, and giving some account of the battle, spoke of him with unusual warmth and approbation, and the young Austrians to whom he had been introduced, courted his friendship in the most conciliating way possible for them to practice.

After the battle, it is well known that Daun advanced with about sixty thousand men against the city of Dresden, then occupied by the Prussians, and that the governor perceiving the Austrians would annoy him from the suburbs which were easy to be possessed, determined to burn them.

The suburbs of Dresden, at this period, composed one of the finest towns in Europe.

In them the wealthiest inhabitants resided, and there the manufactures were carried on, for which Dresden was then so famous. Count Daun, desirous of preserving so valuable a portion of the city, endeavoured to intimidate the governor from his purpose. But he answered his threats as became a soldier, and declared that he would not only set fire to the suburbs if Daun advanced, but would defend the town street by street, and at last the palace itself if compelled. The magistrates fell at his feet, and implored him to change a resolution so terrible, and the members of the royal family also supplicated in vain. Combustibles, were laid in all the houses, and Daun, though apprized of this circumstance, continued to advance. At three o'clock in the morning of the 10th of November, a day ever memorable in the records of Saxony, as Castagnello was calling in the picquets of a small outpost which he commanded, the troops having received orders to enter the suburbs that morning, three guns were fired from the walls, and in the same moment a wild

and universal wail was heard to ascend from all the city. In the course of a few minutes, volumes of smoke arose from different parts of the suburbs, the crackling of destruction was heard, and a thousand flames burst from the roofs of the buildings. The steeples of the town, as seen through the red glare of the opening conflagration, seemed at first like dark columns supporting a rolling canopy of sparks and darkness, but as the burning spread brighter and brighter, every object became more and more distinctly visible, till they appeared with a vividness of outline stronger than in the effect of noon-day. Castagnello saw with surprise a frightened dove fluttering on the weather-cock of one of the steeples, which in day-light was so distant from his post as to be scarcely visible, and he persuaded himself that he discovered the grief and consternation of the multitude of faces, which he beheld in clusters at the windows of all the lofty edifices secured in that part of the town within the walls. But his attention was roused from the contemplation of this awful spectacle by an inci-

dent in itself trivial, but fatal to his fortunes.

Many of the inhabitants, persuaded that the governor would never carry his threats into execution, had remained in their houses till the last moment, and, among others, a Neopolitan, who kept a small music shop, and who was distantly related to Castagnello. This poor man, when the Prussians began to fire the houses, came running in a state of distraction towards the Austrian camp, and happened to fall into the hands of some of Castagnello's men, who brought him to their officer, by whom he was at once recognized and protected. But it so fell out, that one of the young Austrian noblemen came up at the same time, and discovered, with infinite indignation, that the Italian whom he had courted as related to the Duke Del Fuocco, and whom he had seen treated with invariable distinction by his Commander in Chief, was no other than the son of a Neopolitan actress. The gallantry and agreeable qualities of Castag-

nello were entirely forgotten in this serious discovery, and before day-light the story was so spread that even the Field Marshal himself was made acquainted with it. Chagrined and provoked as Daun was by the burning of the suburbs, by which he saw it would be necessary to abandon his design against the town, when Castagnello waited on him in the morning, as it was his custom to do, he was received with such marked coldness, or more properly insolence, that he retired at a loss to divine the cause, of which, however, he was not long allowed to remain ignorant; for scarcely had he quitted the presence of the General, when he was met by two of the Austrians, his most intimate friends, deputed by the other officers of his regiment to inquire the story. Castagnello felt mortified, but frankly told them the truth. This, however, instead of producing any such impression in his favour, as might have been expected, only served to shew the meanness of spirit, which the prejudices of Germany at that

period cherished, to the injury of worth. The Austrians magnanimously said that it would be necessary for him to quit the regiment; that the officers would no longer associate with him as their equal; and they turned away with as much haughtiness as if they had resented an insult.

Castagnello was thunderstruck; his better qualities had been awakened by his profession, and he was in a fair train to have become a respectable man and a gallant officer. But this blow was beyond his strength to withstand: he returned instantly to Count Daun, briefly related what had passed, and tendered his resignation. The Count heard him without emotion, accepted the resignation without speaking, and allowed him to walk away without taking any notice of him. Castagnello went directly into Dresden, and when he had been gone about an hour, an officer came to the General to report some proceedings which had taken place in his brigade during the march, and he spoke of the young Italian in the highest terms of admiration. Castagnello's

commission was still lying on the table, and Daun looked at it for a moment with regret. This was the last and only tribute of respect paid to the talents of the ill-fated youth.

CHAPTER XIX.

Infectious mists and mill-dews hang at 's eyes,—
The weather of a dooms-day dwells upon him.

MIDDLETON.

CASTAGNELLO was but just turned nineteen when he left the army. The provision which Lord Wildwaste, his reputed father, had made for him was still entire, and he had received a handsome remittance a short time before from the Duke Del Fuocco. Had he continued in the army, he was possessed of sufficient to maintain him in the rank of a gentleman; but nothing to spare on pleasures. At such an age, and with such slender means, with an education so defective in principles, and a constitutional temperament so easily excited, without profession; without friends, and tingling with the sense

of insult from the great, he could not but fall to ruin.

He continued but a short time in Dresden; his residence there was marked, however, with many affecting incidents;—a conflict between his good and evil genius, in which the latter prevailed.

His first intention was to return to Naples, but when he reflected on his triumphant departure, and the great expectations entertained by his family, he shrunk within himself, and the pride of youth would not allow him to encounter the mortification of receiving their compassionate sympathy. He felt besides an unconscious enmity towards his mother, as the original cause of the insult and disgrace which he had met with. He then turned his thoughts towards England, but the Earl of Wildwaste, his father, had been dead some time, and was succeeded in his estates and titles by his son, who though only a year younger than himself, the treatment which he had received from the Austrian noblemen tended

to make him distrust. As he possessed a fine voice, and a considerable knowledge of music, the idea sometimes presented itself that he ought to adopt his mother's profession, and go upon the stage. But the contempt in which singers and actors are held in Italy, and the consequences which his connections with the stage had already occasioned, made him abandon this design in the conception: in England his views would probably have been different.

With his mind thus fluctuating, and thus balancing different schemes of life, he passed several painful and gloomy days. The unworthy conduct of his brother officers was a drop of burning misthantropy that continued to eat deeper and deeper into his heart. His conduct however while he remained at Dresden was unstained by any vicious indulgence, although it might have been thought that intellectual suffering so keen as his, acting on such a sanguine character, would have sought relief in sensuality, as it commonly does with young men so situated, and so constituted.

When he had been about ten days in Dresden, he happened to fall in with one of his countrymen, engaged for the Opera at Vienna, and from him he learnt that his eldest sister was in Paris, and celebrated for her musical talents. Upon receiving this information, his wavering thoughts settled, and he went as soon as possible to that gay capital. Here he was led to form an acquaintance with several prodigal persons of both sexes, and his principles of private virtue, always weak, were nearly entirely destroyed. When he gambled, to which from the volatility of his spirits he had but little predilection, he was in general successful. It happened however one night that he was destined to prove the common caprice of fortune. Something had disconcerted him, and he was irritable by the effect of his dissolute excesses. In his first stake he lost; he doubled and lost again, doubled still, and still was a loser, until he had exhausted not only all he was worth in the world, but a considerable sum more.

Maddened almost to frenzy, he left the

house and ran to the theatre. As he reached the door a carriage at the same moment drew up; and he paused to see whom it contained. It was his darling foster-sister, the beautiful Bellina, attended by a young Neopolitan, whom he knew by name, and who, by his attentions, he perceived was her husband.

Castagnello had heard of her marriage some time before, but the intelligence did not much affect him, for he was then in the full enjoyment of every species of Parisian pleasure. But the sight of her, and that in the self same hour in which he was ruined, rendered him incapable of moving from the spot. He saw her pass without having power to address her, and he was on the point of rushing from the theatre, as precipitably as he had come to it, when she chanced to look around, and instantly recognized him. "My dear Castagnello," she exclaimed with delighted sincerity, and came back followed by her husband, who evinced scarcely less satisfaction at the meeting. But Castagnello received her.

sullenly and with difficulty suppressed his tears. This emotion, owing to the conflict of feelings with which he was at that moment distracted, was attributed by them to another cause, and it awakened in the same instant the sorrow of Bellina and the jealousy of her husband, for he noticed in the first glance the bold and handsome appearance of Castagnello, and remarked with alarm that libertine peculiarity of countenance, which may be denominated the forehead mark of profligacy.

Bellina was so pleased to see her former play-mate, one whom she loved with the purity of a sister's affection, that she invited him to go with them into the theatre; but this he declined; her husband however having pressed him to sup with them, he agreed to do so, and left them.

Castagnello, agitated by a thousand unhappy thoughts, having strayed along the street some time, found himself unconsciously at the house where he had been ruined, and in a momentary paroxysm of despair he went again in, and staked the only Louis he

had remaining in his pocket. He was successful, he tried again, and again won. Fortune had changed, and in the course of an hour he had recovered all that he had previously lost, and the time being expired when he had promised to join Bellina and her husband, he went to them in a far different state of mind to that in which he had so shortly before met them.

The sudden change of spirit, which this oscillation of fortune had produced, tended to stir up the whole force of his mind, and he appeared to the husband of Bellina, one of the most dangerous and fascinating young men he had ever seen address his wife. The habits of former intimacy allowed Castagnello a degree of familiarity which contributed essentially to the workings of this empoisoned reflection and the distrust imbibed on observing his appearance, took the character of jealousy before they separated that evening. Experience had made Castagnello sharp-sighted in these feelings, and he was piqued to be suspected; for the affection which he entertained

towards Bellina, was analogous to that only genuine Platonic love which exists between the brothers and sisters of one family; and perhaps, but for this circumstance, he might never have looked on her with profane intentions. The jealousy of her husband, however, awakened in him the first sentiment that he had ever felt of a malignant kind; the evil of his fate and nature was now getting uppermost in his character. Some little rudeness, felt but not describable, and the faintness with which the husband echoed Bellina's request to repeat his visits frequently, stirred up feelings to the force of motives, and actuated him with a vindictive determination against the virtue of the only female he had ever regarded with a correct affection.

He visited Bellina often, and employed all his address to corrupt her imagination. But there was an innocent candour about her, which long prevented her from being aware of his criminal intentions; for like many of the Italian women of high rank, she had been educated in such extreme re-

tirement, that she came into the world at her marriage as simple to its dangers, almost as Eve in her first conversation with the serpent. The jealousy of her husband had in the meantime become stronger and stronger, and the attentions of Castagnello having one evening been insolently obvious, he cautioned her on that night against him, describing the dissolute character which he bore in the Palais Royal.

The headlong career of Castagnello was now thoroughly begun. Experience in gaming taught him caution, and having sometimes detected the fraudulent dexterity of others, he was soon led to practice the same thing himself. This often secured him from that perdition of his all, to which the fluctuations of fortune sometimes exposed him. But one evening, when the run of luck was strong against him, he was detected by an Englishman, with whom he happened to be playing, in an attempt to take an unfair advantage, and received a blow on the spot. Murder at that moment would have been too small an atonement to the revenge of

the Italian. He absolutely howled with rage, as he sprung upon his antagonist, and would literally have worried him with the savage fierceness of a tyger. But the cool Englishman repeated the blow, as often as he was attacked, till Castagnello was compelled to quit the house, followed by the hooting and derision of all present.

His fall was now complete and irretrievable. He went home to his lodgings, and for several days confined himself to bed, meditating the most atrocious vengeance; having at length settled some dreadful purpose, he rose one night, and dressing himself went in quest of his antagonist, but on reaching the hotel where he lodged, was informed that he had two days before left Paris.

Frustrated in his revenge, and undetermined as to what he should next do, he found himself drawn involuntarily towards Bellina's residence. It was near supper time, and her husband being abroad, he found her alone in her Boudoir. At his entrance, she was startled by his altered appearance. His cheeks were flushed, his lips pale and qui-

vering, and his eyes vivid and wild with a supernatural brilliancy. He looked around him with the glance of a demon in quest of a victim, and when he addressed her, she shuddered at the hoarse and hollow sound of his voice.

"In the name of goodness, Castagnello," she exclaimed "what is the matter?—what has happened?"

"I am damned deeper than all the fiends, for they have still the means of a sufficient revenge," was the dreadful reply of the reprobate, and rushing forward, as if driven by some invisible impulse, he seized her by the arm. Terrified by his looks and indignant at this action, she shrieked for help, and in the same moment her husband and several of the domestics entered.

Without requiring any explanation, the servants were ordered to turn him out of doors, and they dragged him to the gate, and threw him into the street like a dog.

This consummate disgrace awakened him from the drunken infatuation of his revenge,

and when he recovered from the shock of the precipitation with which he had been cast from the portal of the hotel, he walked sedately to his lodgings. On returning home he prepared for his immediate departure from Paris, and at day-light next morning set out for Brest, where an expedition was at that time on the point of sailing for India.

When he arrived at Brest, he was haggard and pale. The beauty of his countenance was gone for ever, and instead of that frank and beaming cheerfulness which had rendered him once a delightful companion, his brows were knitted with a morose scowl, and the very accents of his voice were become harsh and abrupt.

Some delay occurred before he obtained permission to join the expedition; but, by the influence of his sister, then the favorite singer of the theatre, to whose good graces one of the courtiers, being anxious to recommend himself, the objection

was obviated, and he embarked for Pondicherry, with the intention of entering the service of some of the native Princes of Hindoostan.

CHAPTER XX.



Not in the desert,
Son of Hodeirah,
Wer't thou abandon'd!
The co-existent fire,
That in the dens of darkness burns for thee,
Burns yet, and yet shall burn.

SOUTHEY.

THE expedition in which Castagnello embarked consisted of several ships of war and transports with troops, and it was his bad fortune to be on board the dullest sailer in the fleet. What rendered this disagreeable circumstance a real misfortune was the ignorance of the master, who having been only accustomed to trade between Brest and Martinique, was totally unacquainted with the coast of Africa, and the currents which bear towards it from the westward.

The consequence was that having parted convoy off Cape St. Vincent, he committed the fatal blunder of keeping too far to the eastward, and being carried also by the current, in a dark and stormy night the vessel struck the ground.

This occurrence, which overwhelmed every other on board with dismay, gave satisfaction to the lacerated heart of Castagnello, and he retired to his cabin, expecting the vessel to sink; for it was supposed that she had grounded on a rock, and would be forced over it by the sea, and go to the bottom on the other side. As the day dawned, however, this alarm was dispelled, for the shore was seen about half a cable's length from the ship; and the wind having abated, and the waves subsided, the crew got out the boats and all on board landed. But scarcely had they touched the beach, when the tide which was then out began to flow again, and with the rise of the water, the wind returned, and the surf came in so furiously, that the vessel was completely wrecked.

While the crew and passengers, consisting of more than fifty persons, stood on the shore contemplating, with the feelings natural to their situation this calamity, a party of Moors came towards them, and in the course of a few hours they were surrounded by several hundreds, who seized them all as slaves.

As the ship broke up, and her cargo was driven to the beach, the Moors opened the bales and boxes, and divided the contents. Those who had seized the men also claimed a share, but this in some instances was refused by the others, quarrels ensued, and the unfortunate cast-aways were almost torn to pieces between them.

Castagnello became the prize of an old Moor, who appeared to be the chief of the plunderers, and being taken by his master into the interior, never afterwards heard of what became of the rest.

That part of Africa where the shipwreck happened, is an extensive sandy desert, between two considerable ridges of hills, which at sea have the appearance of islands, owing

to the lowness of the land, and it is the more dangerous as the mountains are often covered with clouds, and not visible even in the finest weather. Across this dreary and arid desert, on which not a shrub or plant of any kind was to be seen, but only the sand, undulated by the wind into a resemblance of the waves of the sea, Castagnello travelled on foot more than twenty miles, following the horse of Abdullah his master, in company with about twenty of his retainers. During the journey across the desert, the Moors were sullen and silent. They walked in single file along a track of footsteps in the sand, which was so straight that it seemed to have been made by a line, so little did it deviate either to the right or left. The taciturnity of his companions, the stillness of the solitude over which they were moving, and the monotony of the loose light sand in which their steps had no distinct sound, was in unison with the misanthropic musings of the slave. He had so little knowledge of geography, that although aware he was in Africa, and that

he was travelling eastward, he was ignorant whether he was approaching towards the shores of the Mediterranean, or going into the interior, nor did he care.

At sun-set the party reached the extremity of the desolate waste, near the entrance of a narrow pass, where the two ridges of hills met, leaving the spacious herbless solitude that extended to the sea, like a lake between them. Here Abdullah alighted at the side of a spring of beautiful water, which gushed from a fissure in the face of a rock, and spread around a matty carpet of the brightest verdure, till its freshening influence was absorbed in the thirsty sand. At this place they prepared to pass the night. The Moors, after a slight repast from a little haversack which each of them carried, spread their cloakes on the ground, and having paid their evening devotions with their faces towards Mecca, rolled their arms, which they had previously taken from their belts, up in their shawls, and placing them as pillows, stretched themselves down, and were soon all asleep.

But Castagnello, though much fatigued

by the journey, especially in his limbs, which the heaviness of walking in the sand had rendered very stiff and painful, could not close his eyes, and he sat ruminating on the succession of events which had befallen him, as if they had been injuries, wholly insensible to the turpitude of his own conduct, and glad that an opportunity was thus afforded of hiding his dishonour in the unknown regions of Africa. These reflections, calculated as they were to demoralize him more and more, tended however to appease the stings of his vindictive recollections. When towards midnight he fell asleep, his sleep was less perturbed than it had been for many months before, and he awoke in the morning refreshed and disposed to be cheerful. The Moors were pleased with the change, and their own sullenness was also relaxed.

The day was considerably advanced before Abdullah mounted his horse, and Castagnello was surprised at the delay: but the road lay through a narrow defile between two lofty precipices, here and there tufted

with shrubs, and russeted with lichens, through which the morning sun darted the whole force of his beams, but as he ascended the shadows of the cliffs on the right hand, fell across the road, and preserved it cool and delightful during the warmest part of the day. In the afternoon the travellers reached the end of this rocky pass, which opened into another desert, almost as extensive as that which they had crossed on the preceding day, and the Moors cheered Castagnello by pointing forward and making signs, to let him know that he would soon arrive at the dwelling of Abdullah.

The road lay across the desert in a straight line like the other, and when they were near the middle of the waste, Castagnello discovered a minaret and the dome of a mosque rising before him, like a vessel coming from afar at sea. He soon after saw palm and pomegranate trees, interspersed with houses forming with their gardens and verdant environs, a lovely island in this Caspian of sand. As he drew nearer cattle were seen round a

well drinking from troughs which their keepers successively filled with gourds, and in passing he noticed that the troughs were antient marble sarcophagii, adorned with elegant sculpture, on one of which the story of Europa and the Bull was represented. "It is an emblem," thought Castagnello, "of the mind being carried away by violent passions, and the sarcophagus must have been for an outcast like me."

After passing the well, the road lay through a cemetery in which the tombs were overshadowed with cypress trees, among which a number of women veiled, and young children, were seen amusing themselves, as the sun declined. The heart of Castagnello was soothed by these images of repose and social leisure, and he thought that he had never witnessed a scene so calculated for human happiness as this island of the desert. The prejudices which, like all Italians and Christians in general, he entertained against the Moors, were thus softened, and he went forward to the village contented with the lot

that had placed him among a people seemingly so blameless.

The town itself was small, but neatly built, and the main street, which lay due north and south, was a bazar or market place, and a row of palm trees in the middle served to screen it during the short time that it was exposed to the meridian sun.

In this pleasant and unknown village Castagnello remained about ten days, at the end of which, Sabib the only son of Abdullah his master, a fine young man of a free and noble character, made him understand that he was to go with him to a relation, who dwelt beyond the eastern chain of mountains that bounded the desert, no longer however as a slave, but as a friend.

After quitting the desert, they arrived at the foot of a precipice. The rocks were piled on each other like the fragments of a vast building, and the travellers ascended by a path so narrow that they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses. On the top of this black and basaltic cliff, they found .

a plain upwards of a league in breadth, covered with a rich coat of grass, embroidered with anemonies in full blossom, and on which a great number of cattle were feeding, attended by armed herdsmen, who, on seeing the son of Abdullah, came towards him with the reverence of servants to their master.

When they had passed this plain they soon after reached the mountains, and rested during the heat of the day at the side of a fountain, which Sahib, in pointing to the inscription on it, made Castagnello understand had been constructed by Abdullah his father. The road from this place to the brow of the mountains afforded no object of interest; it was a narrow and rugged path beaten out by the footsteps of travellers, but the view from the summit was gloriously magnificent. A long and deep valley, watered by a considerable stream, spread into a plain so vast, that the eye could discover no limit to its extent, for the tops of stupendous mountains beyond it, seemed to rise far behind the curvature of the earth, like the peaks and ridges of so many separate islands. The young

Moor, pointing to this sublime landscape with a lofty and exulting look, intimated by waving his scymeter that it was all subject to the command of his father.

As they descended towards the banks of the river, the Moor began to sing a martial air, full of pathos and solemnity. The imagination of Castagnello was inflamed with an aimless enthusiasm, and he looked abroad on the expanse before him, like Adam at the gate of Paradise after his fall, surveying the earth in all the loneliness of unappropriated nature.

When they had reached an abrupt turn in the road, Sahib directed Castagnello to look up, and he beheld the river rushing from a cavern in the side of the mountains. They followed the course of the stream, till they came to where it was joined by a small rivulet from behind an insulated conical hill, between which and the great chain of mountains, Castagnello was delighted to see cultivated fields and gardens, interspersed with country houses, indicating the neighbourhood of a populous town. Soon after they reached the gate of a fortified city,

which in successive tiers of houses covered the side of the hill.

The uncle of Sahib was the governor, and received his nephew and Castagnello with much kindness. In the sequel it appeared that the Emperor of Morocco was at this time much disturbed in this province of his dominions by a rebellion, in which several Spanish renegados took a distinguished part, and Sahib was desirous of entering the field against them. For this purpose he had come to his uncle, and had brought Castagnello with him, conceiving, as he had the appearance of being a European officer, he might prove useful to him in the war.

The old Governor applauded the heroic spirit of his nephew, and was pleased with his sagacity in bringing Castagnello. In the course of a few days Sahib was placed at the head of a body of cavalry, and Castagnello, equipped as a Moor, attended him to the scene of action. But in the first skirmish the gallant and generous Sahib fell, his party was routed and Castagnello taken prisoner.

When the renegados learnt the rank and

connections of the young chief who had fallen, they were seized with great terror. They knew that the whole force of the Governor would be immediately sent out against them ; even many of their followers lamented the death of Sahib, for the character of his father was much venerated over all the country, and he was universally spoken of by the beautiful title of the Well in the Desert; instead therefore of attempting to reap any advantage from their victory, they retired from the field as if they had lost the battle, and of all the prisoners Castagnello was alone taken with them, and it was indeed at his own request.

It is needless to describe the abandoned character of the renegados, who occasionally raise the standard of revolt against the barbarian authorities of Africa. Castagnello remained with them about two years, in the course of which time they had been gradually driven beyond the eastern confines of the empire of Morocco. Castagnello had at first, like the others, expected that they would establish an independent jurisdiction and state for themselves, but seeing every

prospect of this becoming daily more obscure, he grew weary of their fruitless and unavailing fatigues, and determined to seize the first opportunity of quitting their standard.

When any resolution is once decidedly formed, the opportunity is not long wanting to carry it into effect. The party to whom he always adhered, had, after encountering many hardships among the mountains near the source of the river Adjidi, resolved to attack Bescara, a town of some note, situated on the banks of one of those numerous streams which have their fountain heads among the Algerine mountains, and running southward into the interior of the continent, are absorbed in the deserts, or find outlets unknown to European geographers.

The renegados having heard that the Dey of Algiers had been deposed and a new one appointed, whose authority was disputed by several of the towns, and particularly by the city of Tubnah, against which all the troops in Bescara had marched, resolved to avail themselves of their absence and to sack the place. But in carrying this design

into effect, they met with more resistance than they expected, for a numerous caravan of travelling merchants, with their guards and attendants, had in the meantime arrived, who defended the walls so bravely, that the renegados were repulsed with the loss of some of their bravest soldiers, and Castagnello was left among the wounded. The attack being made in the night, he lay undiscovered and unassisted on the field till the morning.

Among the travellers was a French Academician who, actuated by a laudable desire to make discoveries in Africa, had spent several years with different caravans, carrying on a small trade that furnished a pretext for his being with them. Monsieur La Force was employed by his government, but justly considering how little likely his treatment was to be bettered by appearing in any accredited character, he judiciously preferred the mode of travelling here alluded to, and obtained much valuable information in the management of his little traffic, to which travellers of greater pretension have no means of access. He was now returning home to Paris,

that paradise of all true Frenchmen; with a journal filled with a great deal of curious matter, and with a rich collection of rare plants, seeds, and singular arms, utensils, and antiquities, under the denomination of drugs and merchandize.

Monsieur Le Force, considering himself destined to make a distinguished appearance in the Academy, did not choose to risk his erudite and valuable head in the conflict, not that he was deficient in personal bravery, that characteristic virtue of his countrymen; on the contrary, the undertaking to explore the undescribed and dangerous regions of barbarous Africa by himself, was a proof of courage and intrepidity that the boldest enterprises of few soldiers could match. He came, however, early in the morning to examine the dead, for the purpose of purchasing from those who stripped the bodies, any antique rings, coins, or curious arms, that might be found among them.

As he was walking over the scene of carnage, his foot slipped on a stone foul with clotted blood, and he fell with his face

against the gashy bosom of a Moor that lay dead by the side of Castagnello. "Pest, O sacre Dieu!" exclaimed Monsieur La Force, in his native language, as he rose shuddering. "For the love of God and the holy virgin!" cried Castagnello in Italian, "spare me, have mercy!"—aware how general the custom is for both Moor and Christian, when prowling the field of glory, to put the wounded out of pain.

Monsieur La Force, who was spitting and loathing, and wiping his face, struck with the unusual accent, paused, and looking at Castagnello, said, "Ah, ah, friend! behold the most miserable of mankind," holding up his hands, and shrugging his shoulders as he leered on him, with his face besmeared with gore.

Castagnello repeated his supplication, and La Force, who was too much of an Academician to do any thing either for the love of God or the holy Virgin, was still so much of a man that distress never pleaded to his humanity in vain. In a moment he procured assistance, and forgetful of the object for

which he had come to the field of battle, but uttering every malediction and interjection of abhorrence that the glib tongue of a Frenchman could articulate, at being so clashed against the bloody body of a dead infidel, he carried him to his lodgings. In the way thither, Castagnello, in order still more to conciliate the kindness of Monsieur La Force, told him he was not a Renegado, but an unfortunate young man who had been taken prisoner by them in the interior; for he was so ignorant of the country that he knew not of his being at this time much farther in the interior than he had ever been before. "Ah!" exclaimed Monsieur La Force, and he stopped the persons who were assisting to carry Castagnello to enquire how he came there, and in what direction he had been, conceiving that he was also a traveller. Castagnello thought that he must have committed some indiscretion in saying that he was not a Renegado, and fearful of being abandoned, endeavoured to eat in his words. "Oh! Oh!" said the Frenchman, "it is of no importance, but when you are

better you will tell me all your travels, and I must try to heal you as soon as possible."

Among other things that this indefatigable traveller had observed during his sojourn in Africa, was the art of curing wounds by what is called the first intention, an art which his countrymen scarcely practice at this day, and finding, when he examined Castagnello's, that the lips adhered, he gave his patient a significant nod, and saying, "Bon! bon!" he tied it up without any dressing.

But Monsieur La Force paid dearly for his humanity. Among the dead, a matchless antique ring was found, which an Armenian merchant from Constantinople purchased from an Arab slave for a mere trifle, and refused to part with it at any reasonable price. This disappointment vexed the Frenchman exceedingly, and made him most impatient for the recovery of Castagnello, from whom he expected a world of information. This impatience, with his anxiety to observe the progress of his experiment of the effect of the first intention, kept him in a constant flutter, and he untied the wound

twenty times in the day. On the following morning, however, he had the satisfaction to see that the adhesion was complete, and the patient having passed a good night, was able to answer all his questions.

Monsieur La Force spoke Italian fluently, and Castagnello, having acquired his language chiefly under his mother's tuition, used only the choicest and best expressions; this, with the fine natural intelligence of his mind, led his preserver to form a very high idea of his accomplishments, he was therefore prepared to obtain not only a vast accession to his stock of African knowledge, but large additions to his notes relative to antiquities. For he had discovered that Castagnello was not a man of scientific pursuits, but he spoke so well, and had so many beautiful ideas, that he concluded he must be full of classical learning, and possess an exquisite taste in the remains of antient art. Nothing, therefore, could surpass his vexation and disappointment when he found his accomplished patient utterly incapable of giving a satisfactory answer to any of his

questions. "My God!" cried Monsieur La Force in despair, "thou knowest nothing;" and bounced from his seat. In a moment after, he however, returned to the charge, and enquired if he had seen no remarkable natural phenomenon, and Castagnello glad to be at last able to tell him something, described the great fountain head of the river to which Sahib had directed his attention. The Academician was delighted, and enquired many particulars to which no direct answer could be given; but when Castagnello mentioned the boundless plain watered by the stream, he clapped his hands with rapture, and exclaimed, "The banks of the river were superb!" "Beautiful!" said Castagnello, "But nothing could surpass the lovely environs of the city, fields, gardens, and country houses." "A city too, and near that great river!" exclaimed Monsieur La Force, "happy man; it was the source of the Niger; you have been at Tombactoo:" and he kissed Castagnello in a transport of admiration, crying in the same moment, "How miserable am I to have spent so many years

in the petty regions of Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Mountains of the Moon. "What, however," continued he, subsiding into a calm and philosophical mood, "renders these discoveries of your's the more important is, that they tend to throw light on many things hitherto imperfectly explained, or not explained at all. Innumerable streams, like the Adjidi and the Wadi Abiad, rise among the northern mountains of Africa, take a southern course, and certainly do not fall into the Mediterranean: where then do they go? I will tell you. Depend upon it that the source of the Niger, which you have had the happiness to behold, is the outlet to some great congregation of waters behind the mountains, the confluence of all those rivers."

Castagnello had been on the shores of the lake Elloudeah, and had travelled more than forty leagues along its banks without being sensible that he was going round it, and he described it as a sea so wide that the mountainous land could not be seen across it.

Monsieur La Force struck his forehead, and rising, said with solemn emphasis to his patient, "Another Columbus! you are the greatest of men. I will go in quest of that superb water, and all Europe will resound with the fame of our discoveries." Accordingly, as soon as the necessary preparations were made, Monsieur La Force set out for the mountains of Belid al Jerid, or the land of grasshoppers, and in seeking the source of the Niger and the metropolis of Tombactoo, went into that undiscovered country from which no traveller returns.

CHAPTER XXI.

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This solitude but more foment's despair,
Recals—compares—and to the incessant pangs
Of Spite, revenge, and shame, condemns my soul!
O! what a miserable slave am I,
Precipitated from the tow'ring hope
Of eagle-eyed ambition, to the abyss
Of mutt'ring horror, curs'd from thought to thought.

SMOLLET.

BEFORE his departure from Bescara, the warm hearted and ingenious Monsieur La Force arranged with the obstinate Armenian merchant, that he should see Castagnello to Bujeiah, a sea port at the mouth of the river Zowah, about eighty miles to the east of the city of Algiers, and, at this place, after a journey of ten days, they arrived without meeting with any adventure. Here they embarked in a French vessel, bound to Marseilles, but the day following the wind came

so strong from the Westward that they were obliged to bear away before it, and were driven into Malta, having suffered severely in attempting to make the island of Sardinia.

In Valetta, the capital of Malta, Castagnello met with a Neapolitan nobleman, one of the knights who had been a favorite admirer of his mother, and who received him with great kindness and procured for him a commission in the Life Guards of the Grand Master. Perhaps in all Europe there never had existed such a dissolute society as that of Malta at this period, and Castagnello was soon one of the most distinguished gamblers and libertines in the island. The ruffian Alphonso was then a private in his company, and having assisted him in some of his intrigues, was raised to the rank and dignity of his confidential servant. About the same time a company of players from Sicily arrived to perform during the carnival, and among them was an actress remarkable for her stupidity on the stage, but possessed of extraordinary beauty. The patron of Castagnello, Don Juliano Piccha, having,

notwithstanding his vows of chastity as one of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, —vows which were as little respected by the whole order as by himself—induced Signora Cantabella to become his mistress, was supplanted in her good graces by Castagnello.

It happened one evening that when Don Juliano came to sup with her, that Furbo, who was then her servant, pretended she was indisposed and asleep. The old gentleman alarmed at this intelligence insisted on being admitted to her apartment, and found her in high health and spirits, lovingly supping with Castagnello—Alphonso at the moment serving them with some beautiful champagne, which Don Juliano himself had that morning sent to her.

Enraged, as it may well be supposed at this discovery, the knight accused Castagnello of the basest ingratitude, and assailed him with a torrent of degrading epithets. The latter retorted; from words they came to threats, and swords were drawn, but the cries of the faithless damsel were so loud

and vehement, that before the rivals could make a thrust at each other, the house was filled from the streets, and they were both disarmed.

This affair being reported next morning to the Grand Master, who had heard something of the character which Castagnello bore in the place, ordered him, Alphonso, and Furbo to be forthwith banished the island, which was done accordingly, in the course of the same day, and they were landed next morning on the coast of Sicily, at the mouth of the river Madiuni, formerly the harbour of Selinus.

Destitute of all the means of subsistence, Castagnello and his companions had no other resource but robbery.

These desperate men were not long left without an opportunity of exercising their inevitable profession. While they were yet standing on the beach looking at the Sparanaro depart, from which they had been landed, and swearing a violent and aimless revenge against the whole immaculate order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, Father

Paolo passed on one of his begging excursions attended by Bernardo the Locandieré of Castel Vetrano, who was armed with a musket. The outcasts ran instantly to them, as if actuated by a single impulse, Bernardo flung down his gun and fled, but the Friar, unfitted by his garb for such celerity, was obliged to stand and deliver. The spoil was not valuable, but as it consisted chiefly of dried fruits, wine and provisions, it was better to them at that time than money.

In this their first adventure, Castagnello and his companions affected to be greatly more fierce and tremendous than there was any occasion for them to be, and Alphonso proposed that they should put the Holy Father to death. But Furbo's blood turned cold at this horrible proposal, and Castagnello, naturally more humane, decidedly refused. Paolo, who, as we have already observed, was a self-possessed adroit knave, discovering by their conversation that this was their first adventure, addressed them freely on the subject of their profession, and offered to enter into a confidential correspondence with them, on

condition of sharing regularly in their plunder. He spoke to them of the catacombs of Selinus as an inscrutable retreat, and pointed out in what manner, by prudence and perseverance, qualities which secure success in all pursuits, whether good or evil, they might acquire money enough to enable them, in the course of a short time, to return to the world as honest men.

Too well pleased to hear of any place of shelter with such an eventual prospect, and too long accustomed to general delinquency in small affairs to feel any repugnance to the principle of robbery, both Furbo and Alphonso at once acceded to the scheme suggested. As for Castagnello, the captainship of banditti was exactly the situation for which a singular train of circumstance seemed to prepare him so well, that it might be considered as the natural issue of his destiny. Having thus arranged with Paolo a plan of co-operation for mutual advantage, they were conducted by him to the catacombs, and shown the marks by which the intricacies of the labyrinth could be easiest ex-

plored. How he came to possess this knowledge was never well explained, but several years before a band of robbers had resided there, who suddenly departed none ever knew into what region, and about the same period Paolo came in the garb of a young peasant to the gate of the Capuchin monastery at Sciaeca, and prayed to be admitted for the love of St. Francis as a novice ; nor had any of his brethren, till the meeting with the ill-fated Leonardo, reason to suspect his integrity, but much to admire his indefatigable zeal in providing for their enjoyments.

Alphonso, a Calabrian peasant, and whose highest pleasures had been those of a subaltern's servant in the guard of the Grand Master of Malta, thought the catacombs very comfortable quarters. But Furbo, footman to a Courtezan, was hugely shocked at the idea of taking up his abode in the receptacles of the antient dead. Castagnello regarded their lodgings with indifference, and only felt irritation against his stars in being necessitated to associate with wretches so vile, and to adopt a profession which he still con-

sidered derogatory. For although differing little in detail from what he had followed with the Renagados in Africa, it was not like theirs exalted with any ambitious aim ; it wanted the iris of political glory, and resolved itself into an impassioned attempt to wrench a miserable existence from the fangs of famine. The poison of misanthrophy, which had been long preying upon the vitals of his mind, shot keener and fiercer pangs through all his reflections, and his thoughts partook at times of Satanic energy.

He contracted a sullen hatred against Alphonso and Furbo, and never spoke to them but when obliged, and he bore himself apart from them, even in their enterprizes, so haughtily that he may be described as deliberately insolent. During the greater part of the day he would sit among the ruins of Selinus contemplating the sea, and it was difficult to say whether his gloomy mind delighted most in the calm or the tempest. For when all was smooth, silent, sunny and cloudless, he was observed to knit his brows, and to assume the sinister look of distrust, as

if he ruminated on those false and flattering assurances of fortune, which are made up of fraud and hypocrisy and terminate in crimes. When the winds were abroad, and the rack flying over the expanse of the sky, he would stand aloft on some broken column or pedestal, and drawing his sword seem to menace the heavens with a courageous and sublime impiety. On other occasions he would make Furbo serve him with wine till he had sunk himself lower than brutality, but in the progress of intoxication the original hilarity of his youthful fancy would sometimes break out with more than its natural brilliancy, like the vividness with which the light glances from the fractures of broken crystals. But the general mood and frame of his behaviour was stern, resolute, and relentless, and he passed many hours daily walking backwards and forwards in the apartment, which he had made choice of for himself, with his arms folded and his eyes fixed in abstraction.

Several months had passed in this way, during which the outcasts made so many.

successful attacks on the travellers between Mazzara and Sciacca, that the road was almost deserted, and that by Castel Vetrano preferred although considerably longer. The consequence of which was, that Castagnello, conceiving he had acquired money enough for his share of plunder to enable him to try his fortune in the gaming houses of Palermo, had resolved, on the very morning in which the unfortunate Countess fell into his hands, to separate himself from his hated and vulgar companions. But this design was frustrated, as we have already related.

After leaving the volunteers among the ruins, admiring his intrepidity, he conducted the Countess to Sciacca. During the course of the journey she so far recovered as to be able to request him to take her to the Convent of which her aunt was the superior; but with the exception of the few brief sentences which passed on that occasion, they reached the gate in silence. Having assisted her to alight, and seen her safely received within the walls, he re-mounted, but in pass-

ing along the street he was stopped by a number of persons, who had seen him pass with the Countess, and who knew the horse to belong to one of the volunteers. He answered their enquiries as discreetly as he could, informing them that the Count had been wounded but not dangerously, and he praised the alacrity and generosity of their friends in enabling him to bring the Countess to a safe asylum. In the meantime the crowd was pressing in from all quarters, and he was obliged to dismount and give the horse to a boy, requesting him to take it to the stable of the owner, as he walked towards the only inn which the town afforded.

Such a day as this was in Sciacca! The anticipations of Father Leonardo were fully realized; and the old maiden ladies were particularly curious to hear all the details of what the Countess had suffered from the robbers.

CHAPTER XXII.



Troops of artizans
Follow his panting horse, and with a strange
Confused noise, partly with joy to see him,
Partly with fear for what his haste portends.

WEBSTER.

THERE lived at this time in Sciacca a little black and yellow apothecary, whom his friends styled *Il Medico Gabinetto*, but he was more generally known by the epithet of *Poty Gabi*. His hair was jet black, and it lay as smoothly on his head, as if it had been dressed with some of his own ointment. He commonly wore a purple velvet waistcoat, speckled with gold, green inexpressibles, a sky blue silk coat, with large yellow buttons, and a cocked hat that might have served a grenadier. His watch chain, long and dangling, was adorned with many

trinkets, among others with a small shell, on which he set great value, as it had been brought from the West Indies; and when he walked abroad, or to visit his patients, he usually carried a silver headed cane, considerably taller than the man who grasped it by the middle.

Nobody thought so much of Poty Gabi, as he did of himself; he allowed however that there might have been doctors who treated their patients with more success, but was quite sure none carried to the couch of disease more skill, or sent so much medicine, notwithstanding which many of his patients unaccountably died.

The doctor having a small estate in the neighbourhood of Mazzara, was in the practice of annually going thither to dispose of the produce of his vines and olives, and it happened on his return about a fortnight before the period of which we are treating, that he was robbed by Castagnello and his companions, and besides his money the invaluable shell and his watch were taken from him.

This affair at the time occasioned a great deal of talk, particularly respecting the shell, and no one spoke half so much on the subject as the doctor himself; he lamented his loss the more on account of the interest which every body seemed to take in it. He had worn the shell upwards of ten years in the public view, and no one before ever seemed to notice it, but now when it was gone, he was called on twenty times a day for a description of its beauties, and while describing it, a curious twinkling was observed in the corner of the eyes of his auditors, which rendered it sometimes difficult to believe that they were sincere in the sympathy they professed; and he was often disturbed after he had retired to bed, by mischievous boys, bringing worthless shells from the shore, at his door enquiring if they were not his?

Among those who most frequently and seemingly most fervently condoled with Poty Gabi on the irreparable loss which he had sustained, was a young man of the name of Gaminetti, who was not less satis-

fied with himself than the doctor with his own medical knowledge. Signor Gaminetti was indeed a very remarkable person, or rather, as he thought himself, he possessed a remarkable person, and that a very handsome one. His face was beautiful, and his cheeks were so prettily dimpled, and he knew this so well, that he constantly appeared with a smiling countenance, but his legs were round and not well formed, and, being inclined to corpulency, his belly was larger than became his years. But as he was not sensible himself of these peculiar drawbacks on his beauty, he rendered them more conspicuous by his fondness for dancing, although he had no natural taste for the art, being destitute of any musical ear; so that what with his blunders as to time in the dance, attracting attention to his legs, and his inordinate conceit of his person, causing him not only to hold his head up but to hold it back in dancing as in walking, he was really a very ridiculous figure.

Signor Gaminetti, like all those who are on good terms with themselves, had a little

epice of satire in his disposition, and he was in consequence regarded as agreeable company by many charitable minded ladies and gentlemen of Sciacca, who in a sociable manner delighted to pity the faults and misfortunes of their neighbours; and the story of Poty and his shell had often furnished him with a pleasant topic. It was however observed that although Signor Gaminetti was often invited to parties, he never gave any in return; perhaps he thought the invitations but a just tribute to his singular merits.

In the course of time somebody insinuated to the Doctor that he had been more than once the subject of Gaminetti's sneers, and particularly that he had made the loss of his shell a very diverting story. This piece of malicious information sunk very deep into the breast of Poty Gabi, and he burned for revenge. He knew the self-satisfaction of Gaminetti as well as the whole town, and he was aware that if he could make his person in any way an object of public derision, he should obtain a complete and

lasting triumph over him. But the difficulty was to devise the means.

Matters were in this state when the attack on Count Corneli took place, and it came to pass when Castagnello brought the Countess to Sciacca that he wore the Doctor's watch, and that Signor Gaminetti recognized the chain and shell, as Castagnello was going to the inn attended by so many of the people. Gabi's shop being at hand, Gaminetti without reflecting on any of the consequences turned around to the Doctor, who was standing behind the half door elevated on his mortar, endeavouring to see over the crowd, and told him in a sarcastic manner that the stranger had certainly his watch and Indian shell.

The Doctor being of a peppery temper, irritated by the sneer of Gaminetti, quickened by revenge, and anxious to recover his jewel, darted out of the shop without speaking, and nimbly elbowing the crowd aside, reached Castagnello, and pulled the watch out of his pocket. This action, though instantaneous, was perfectly understood by the multitude

who had all one way or another heard something of the shell, and twenty hands in the same moment seized Castagnello, and dragged him before a magistrate.

The Doctor, content with recovering his trinket, returned to his shop, but he was almost instantly summoned to attend the examination of the robber. Gaminetti, in expectation of a scene that would afford some amusement, was the bearer of the magistrate's message to him, and they walked together to the council-chamber. The Poty said not a word, but meditated on the ridicule that he had suffered from his companion. Gaminetti, on the contrary, was in high glee, and amused himself exceedingly with the anticipation of what he thought must take place. In this state they reached the chamber where the magistrate was sitting with Castagnello before him and a great assemblage of spectators around.

The Doctor was asked by the Magistrate if he knew the person at the bar. "Please your worship," replied the little vindictive wasp, fluttering with malice, "by your leave

I will tell you the whole particulars. Not being so tall as my good friend Signior Gaminetti there, for it has not pleased God to give me such long legs, and far less such thick legs, seeing a crowd coming along the street, I turned my mortar upside down and mounting upon the bottom, stood at my shop door, to see what was going forward. By this help I was raised so high that my belly was above the half door, and not having to thank my friends for contributing like those of the worthy Signor Gaminetti, by much good eating to make it so large as his, I could stand without inconvenience and look out with ease. While I was thus elevated, my beautiful friend Signor Gaminetti there came running towards me from the mob—O, I shall never forget his countenance!—his cheeks scooped out into the most benevolent dimples!—the sight of them made me not only forget the fatness of his legs, but that even his waistcoat was so big with belly, I forgot in that moment how often he has raised a laugh at my expence, while he was most substantially feasting at the expence of

others. I forgot when he walks, but more especially when he dances, that he pushes his belly forward as an article deserving of public attention ; and I thought with a sigh, how much it is to be lamented that so pretty a youth as my amiable friend Signor Gaminetti there, should have no ear for music, and yet be so fond of dancing, and that his legs, which were never made for that purpose, should be always, in consequence, thrown into the most awkward perplexity. But, alas ! we cannot help our defects, and therefore should not be proud of our beauties ; and if Signor Gaminetti is afflicted with a big belly, he may console himself with the beauty of his face ; and if he has fat legs, look at his dimples and you will forget them."

The Doctor continued speaking in this ridiculous manner until the whole assembly was convulsed with laughter, while poor Signor Gaminetti, who had placed himself in a conspicuous situation to enjoy a far different scene, was ready to sink into the earth with shame and vexation. Never was revenge more complete ; and the Doctor having

vented all his gall, and being satisfied with his victory, was little disposed to prosecute Castagnello. The good humour of the crowd was also propitiated by the sacrifice which had thus been made of the self-conceit of a young man, whom no one esteemed, so that when the little Apothecary declined to make any accusation against the gallant robber, they actually applauded his generosity, exclaiming as he left the hall, "Viva Signor Gabi! viva Poty Gabi! viva il medico Gabinetto!"

In the meantime Father Leonardo had arrived from Castel Vetrano. In the morning he had been carried before Signor Pavietto, a plain sensible man, not over satisfied at any time with the discretion of Signor Corbo his colleague, and having been carefully and calmly examined, was set at liberty, while Paolo, although much more adroit and clever in his answers, was remanded for another examination.

These circumstances being reported to the Magistrates of Sciacca during the time that the vindictive little Doctor was venting his spleen, they deemed it necessary to com-

CHAPTER XXIII.



What angel shall

Bless this unworthy husband? he cannot thrive
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, relieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE messenger whom Paolo in the moment of alarm, had sent from Castel Vetrano to the catacombs, arrived about an hour before midnight. Being unacquainted with the secrets and manifold passages of the labyrinth, he did not venture to explore them alone, but fired a pistol at the entrance, and Alphonso made his appearance to ascertain the cause of this unusual occurrence. On hearing the message, he requested Bernardo, the bearer, to await, and alertly retiring into the vaults, returned in the course of a few minutes, with the wounded Count. Few words passed:

Alphonso assisted Corneli over the ruins and rough ground, till he reached the place where Bernardo had left his horse, and then hastened back to his den.

The Count having mounted, was obliged, on account of the pain he suffered from his wound, to ride slowly, and Bernardo walked at his stirrup. As they proceeded along, Bernardo made several unsuccessful attempts to enter into conversation, but he was as often sullenly repulsed, and they travelled on in silence.

They had not, however, gone far when the Count stopped his horse, and turning suddenly round, listened a few seconds, and said, "Did you hear that?"

"I hear nothing but the noise of the sea breaking on the rocks," replied Bernardo, and the Count rode on.

When they had reached the brow of a hill, the Count halted a second time, and Bernardo said, without any question being asked,—“It is but the baying of a wolf on the mountains.” Corneli took no notice of his observation, but contemplated the ex-

tent of desolation which spread like a silent cemetery of tombs in the moonlight below them. The fragments, in the silvery brightness of the side, which they presented to the moon, contrasted with the blackness of their shadows, might have been compared to human beings attended by their good and bad angels. As this thought rose in the fancy of the Count, a dark cloud floated over the moon, and the scene was troubled and overcast. Bernardo, observing an expression of great anxiety in his countenance, said, "It is indeed a terrible place, and our acquaintance are not the worst inhabitants that have resided yonder." Corneli made no reply, but walked his horse slowly, and Bernardo, not being checked, continued:—

"Those antients must have been terrible sinners, for, although they had the saints living among them, their wickedness was so great that the heavens were obliged to weed them utterly away from the face of the earth. I wonder how it is Signor, that we are all so very wicked. Don't you think

it would have been much better and saved a vast of trouble, had sin been kept out of the world altogether. But our natural sins are nothing to those we are obliged to commit, or to make others do, for the sake of law and right, as it is called. If a man kills another, it is called murder, and yet the law itself makes no scruple to take away life. And surely it would have been better, instead of ordering us not to steal, to have made things so that we should have had no occasion to do so. And, as for adultery, had there been no marriages, there could have been no adultery. Now, what can be said of laws that are the creators of the sins that they punish?"

The Count at first paid no attention to what Bernardo was saying, but as he proceeded he became surprised at the character of his observations, and allowed him to talk on without interruption.

"Thus it is you see, my Lord," he continued, "how it happens that poor men are made wicked. It is not their fault, but the fault of those who make the laws, and I

should think that it is of very little consequence in the eye of heaven, whether a man kill another by a stiletto or a statute: for if we cannot get what we need without robbing, surely the sin is not in the robbery but in the need; and if we can spare what we are robbed of, surely it is very wicked, and against all goodness to punish the unfortunates who are compelled by their need to take what we could very well spare. Now, my lord, what will you be the worse after your wound is healed, by the loss of the trifle of money that the poor men in the catacombs have taken from you. I know that if I were in your lordship's place—

“What would you do?” cried Corneli, amused at the art and ingenuity of Bernardo.

“I would not,” replied Bernardo; “I would not go this night to Castel Vetrano.”

“Why so?” enquired the Count, curious to discover his object, being now aware of his drift.

“I would go to Mazzara,” answered Bernardo, “where nobody as yet has heard

of your being robbed, and you may get horses there in the morning, and a very comfortable letica, to carry you to Palermo without any questions being asked, or any necessity imposed on you to hunt our friends in the catacombs to death for the public good."

Corneli had much stronger reasons than these for adopting this advice, but he did not choose to acquaint Bernardo with them. On the contrary, he appeared to acquiesce in his opinion, and when they reached the high road, instead of going on to Castel Vetrano, he turned his horse towards Mazzara, where he arrived about the break of day. Bernardo, who knew the town well, instantly procured mules and a letica to carry the Count to Palermo; and not choosing to apprize the persons, from whom he hired them, of his having been at the catacombs, he pretended that they had come that morning from Castel Vetrano, and cautioned the Count to do the same.

On reaching the metropolis, Corneli immediately made some necessary arrangements

with his agent, and embarked for the continent, before it was known to the public that he had met with any accident in his journey. In the meantime his infant son had continued to thrive, and before his departure he left instructions that he should, as soon as possible, be sent to the care of his mother's family at Messina.

Baron Aleamo, the brother of the Countess, and who ought naturally to have taken a deep interest in the fate of his sister, was, at the time the Count's letters arrived, engaged in some philosophical pursuit, which so entirely occupied his whole attention that he had not a thought to bestow on any other subject; and when in the course of a few days after, he received a letter from the Countess, informing him that she was in the convent at Sciacca, of which their aunt was the superior, he concluded that she had fallen into some of those indiscretions, which are alledged to be not peculiar to the Sicilian ladies, and that the less any of her friends said about her the better.

The conduct, however, of her aunt the

Abbess was very different. Previous to the arrival of the Countess, she had been informed by the boatmen of what had happened, and her grief and anxiety were nothing short of Father Leonardo's anticipations. It may therefore be easily conceived, without description, how happy she was to receive her niece from the arms of Castagnello.

In the course of her ride from the ruins, the horror and agitation into which the Countess had been thrown by the death of Alphonso, had so far subsided, that on alighting at the convent, she was able to enjoy the maternal embraces of her aunt, and in a condition to relate the story of her misfortunes. Having communicated the circumstances already described, she mentioned that the Count, on seeing her recover from the shock which she felt at the idea of sleeping in a sepulchre, from which the relics of the dead had been removed to make room for her, seemed disposed to indemnify her for his former inattention, by the particular kindness of his caresses: and that, deceived by this flat-

tering change in his behaviour, she had soon after fallen asleep beside him; the robbers having, on the faith of a large reward, promised to assist, in the morning, to remove the Count to Castel Vetrano. But, during her sleep, the perfidious and profligate Corneli had risen and quitted her unknown, as she supposed at first, to the banditti, who had retired to another apartment for that night. How long he had left her before she awoke she could not tell, but she was disturbed in her sleep by the ruffian Alphonso laying his rude hands upon her in the dark. Starting from the floor where she lay and screaming for help, Castagnello had come into the chamber, followed by Furbo with a light, and happily again rescued her from the brutality of the Calabrian. Enraged to be again thus frustrated, Alphonso rushed for his sword followed by Castagnello; the Countess in the same moment also ran from the mausoleum, in which this hideous business had taken place, and going forward in the labyrinth at random, fortunately, and as if miracu-

lously conducted, reached the corridore, and escaped by the opening in the vault through which she had been led by Castagnello.

What then took place has been already described, and we shall now resume the story of her unfortunate protector.

CHAPTER XXIV.



O, good old man ! how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world.—
But, poor old man ! thou prun'st a rotten tree
That cannot so much as a blossom yield,
In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE Castagnello remained in the prison of Sciacca, the Abbess liberally furnished him with every necessary to alleviate the privations of his condition ; the volunteers also assisted him with money, and frequently visited him, promising a continuance of their endeavours to obtain an abatement of his punishment. Nor did the females of the town show any want of the usual charity of the sex on this occasion. We shall not insinuate that their kindness was at all influenced by the handsome figure of the culprit,

and far be it from us to allow that any other sentiment than the purest benevolence, led so many elderly ladies to his cell with gifts and pity, although they particularly questioned him about the Countess, and wondered how she could contrive to pass the time pleasantly in the doleful mansions of the antient dead.

When he had been about ten days in prison, he was summoned one morning to prepare for the journey to Cape Pasero, together with two other convicts, also sentenced to confinement in the same place. These two were coupled by fetters like blood-hounds, but in consequence of the interest which the public took in his fate, Castagnello was spared this degradation.

Their road lay along the skirts of the coast at the bottom of Mount San Calogero, a rugged track unfit for wheel-carriages even from the gates of Sciacca. On approaching the river Verdura, it was much swollen by the rain of a thunder-storm that had taken place in the course of the night; and they found a letica and several mules, with an

English traveller and his servants standing on the bank, afraid to pass the torrents. The Englishman, on seeing the convicts and their conductors, entered into conversation with them, and enquired particularly into the circumstances of the offence, which had reduced so fine a young man as the outcast, to such a state of wretchedness. The kind treatment which the ill-fated Castagnello received from the good people of Sciacca, had greatly tended to appease his misanthropy; perhaps the reflection of having behaved so much better than he intended to the Countess, had also some share in producing the cheerful composure which he then enjoyed. Before the waters had so far subsided as to render it prudent to attempt the ford, the Englishman felt a strong interest in his favour, and assured him that on his return to the capital he would exert all his influence to obtain an entire remission of the punishment to which he had been sentenced. This benevolent partiality was soon converted into an obligation.

The stranger and his servants, like the

generality of their countrymen in similar situations, became impatient at the duration of the bridgeless flood, and by menaces at length induced their Sicilian conductors to try the ford. The mules with the luggage were led across in safety, but the letica, in which the master and his valet were seated, was not so fortunate. In the middle of the stream one of the mules stumbled, and the letica was upset. Castagnello darted forward, and in the moment of almost inevitable destruction rescued the passengers.

When the immediate consequences of this accident were put to rights, the Englishman, who was going to see the ruins of Triocala, took leave of his deliverer, not however without presenting him with a sum of money, and renewing still more warmly the promises of his endeavour to serve him. The convicts turned off to the left, being obliged to rest that night in Calatabellota, a small miserable town, picturesquely situated on the summit of a very lofty and in many places inaccessible moun-

tain, the inhabitants of which are notorious for their wild and desperate character. The classical reader will perhaps recollect it was on this hill that the adventurers Trypho and Athenio established that republic of slaves who defended themselves with such constancy and valour against their masters, that the Consul Aquilius was obliged to lay seige to them with the regular army, and extirpated but could not subdue them.

Castagnello and his companions were lodged in a small locanda or wine-house for the night, when as they sat at supper with the officers who had charge of them, an old priest, Father Giacomo, came in, and entered into conversation with them. The appearance of this venerable man deeply interested Castagnello, who was at that time peculiarly susceptible of kindly impressions. He was pale and thin, and his eyes were full of a sad and pathetic expression, which the melancholy accents of his voice rendered extremely touching. His beard was entirely hoary, and on the head of the tall staff with

which he supported his feeble and aged steps, was affixed an ivory crucifix, that gave a picturesque effect to the apostolic simplicity of his manners and deportment. He had evidently come to offer consolation to the convicts, but his attention was soon particularly addressed to Castagnello ; indeed the two other delinquents were coarse and hardened vagabonds, whom a long career of petty crimes and punishments had rendered callous to every moral impression.

Father Jacomo having received from Castagnello a short account of the immediate causes of the necessity which obliged him to become a robber, and of the subsequent events which had finally brought him to the condition in which he then appeared, that amiable old man endeavoured to make him sensible that fortune was not altogether to blame for what had befallen him, at the same time admitting, in a mild but diffident manner, that our errors in life are as often the result of some inborn impulse, as they are attributable to the defects of our judg-

ment. This judicious concession to the prejudices of Castagnello conciliated his attention, and the Friar continued. "Were it not indeed for this innate evil, this effect of original sin, there would have been no occasion for heaven to have communicated to man the blessed doctrines of salvation."

Castagnello had never before held any conversation of a religious kind, and he happened to be in a frame of mind favourable to the benign object which the pious ecclesiastic had in view. He accordingly listened with profound interest to what he said.

"I think," continued Father Jacomo, "that it is greatly owing to the negligence with which constitutional predilections to do wrong, are allowed to grow into habits, that much of the guilt and sorrow which darken the beauty and order of the world ought to be ascribed. It seems to me undeniable, that punishment alone is not sufficient to remove the causes of criminal actions. There are certain moral secretions natural to man, and it is from them that our

good and evil actions arise. These can no more be eradicated from the intellectual constitution by employing the scourge or the rack, than a patient afflicted with disease can be cured by the same means. It is only by being changed in nature, born again by religion, that the moral patient can hope for a cure."

"But how is that to be done, holy Father," said Castagnello disconsolately. "By keeping the mind's eye fixed on the sublime objects which religion has disclosed."

"And what are those objects?" enquired the penitential convict.

The old man looked at him with indignant surprize, not believing it possible that an officer in the Life Guards of the Grand Master of the religious fraternity of St. John of Jerusalem, could be so ignorant, but when he saw the sincere and unaffected expression of his countenance, his heart melted with tenderness and compassion.

By this time the night was far advanced, and the officers, being desirous of going to sleep, they requested the Friar to desist

from any farther conversation with the prisoners and to go away. Castagnello begged them to allow him to remain a little longer, but the old man himself was tired, and declined to stay ; he promised however to come again in the morning. But in going home he was attacked by two blackguards in the street, who pushed him down and otherwise used him so ill, that he was unable next morning to quit his bed, and Castagnello saw him no more. His observations however had taken a strong hold of the outcast's mind, which in the whole course of the journey from Calatabellota to La Catholica, wandered as it were in a chaos of conjectures, and vague imaginings. His spirit was like the soul of an Atheist immediately after death, when it finds itself in the eternal regions, and still doubts if the things and elements around are everlasting truths, or the phantasma of a dream.

CHAPTER XXV.



Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?
Why, what means this? Why do you look on me?
I see no more in you than in the ordinary
Of Nature's sale-work.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the convicts reached the banks of the Platina, they were informed that the English traveller had crossed the river the preceding evening, a circumstance at which they were much surprized, for the fishermen at the spot assured them that the river was more swollen than it was then, although they considered it still impassable. But the convicts, on being told in what manner the enterprize was effected, resolved to attempt it also.

The chad-fishers at this place have constructed five or six small islands in a line across the stream, by means of wattled stakes filled up with turf and stones, and

between these they stretch their nets. Over the channels which separate these artificial islets, the Englishman instructed the fishermen to lay poles and sticks, and upon these, from isle to isle successively, the travellers crept on all fours, swimming the mules in the river.

At the city of La Catholica, the convicts intended to halt for the night, but one of the police officers having procured at that place the loan of a mule for himself and his friend, to ride and tye, it was resolved that they should go as far as the priestless town of Siculiana. The prisoners remonstrated against this, as subjecting them to a scandalous degree of fatigue; and Castagnello having expressed himself in a manner more becoming an officer in the life guards of the Grand Master, than his actual condition, the officers threatened to shoot him on the spot, but commuted the insult by only tying his hands behind.

To this abject and ultimate disgrace the miserable outcast however submitted with a smiling countenance, but it indicated no

cheerfulness at heart, for it was but the external symptoms of a convulsion in the mind, that nearly overwhelmed the throne of reason. At first, the officers and the other felons regarded it as the expression of a cool contempt, and the former were enraged at his insolence, while the latter admired his courage. But all were struck with awe and alarm, when he soon after began to sing and warble some of his mother's most brilliant bravuras, with astonishing taste and spirit. In the midst of one of the gayest, he suddenly burst into tears and threw himself on the ground, sobbing like an artless and offended infant.

This affecting incident touched even the hearts of the guards with remorse, and they unbound his hands ; but when the fit of passion had abated, his tranquillity was not restored, and he marched to Siculiana sullenly and stern.

This town, to which we have applied the epithet of priestless, is distinguished in the priest-ridden region of Sicily, for not having a single convent within its pre-

cincts ; this, however, is not entirely owing to the philosophical illumination of the inhabitants, for when Swinburn, the traveller, several years after, stopped there for the night, he met with a thesis pasted on the walls of his bed-chamber, to be maintained in the schools of Gergente, by a native of Siculiana, wherein the said native undertook to demonstrate that the Copernican system is impious and absurd, and that the earth stands still and the sun moves round it like the sails of a windmill round the pivot. But for that matter, perhaps, it does not very well become us to be satirical on this orthodox sage of Siculania, for about three years prior to the present Anno Domino, we were present with divers learned and publishing personages, printers and booksellers, in the house of a classical friend, within the sound of Bow bell, for the express purpose of hearing an old village barber deliver certain truths—a special revelation no doubt to him, that would tend to prove there were no such things as the laws of nature ; and he really began by

proposing that we should commence a subscription to enable him to make a planetary machine, according to his notions, by which the whole public would at once be convinced of the absurdity of the Newtonian system. But to return to our unfortunate hero.

Owing to fatigue, vexation, or to something else, when Castagnello reached Siciliana, he was very unwell: his pulse beat high, his cheeks were inflamed, and his eyes sparkled with the fire of a burning fever, so that next morning, instead of being in a condition again to take the road, he was unable to raise his head from the sleepless stone which had served him for a pillow, his couch being the floor of the warehouse where the party lodged.

The officers were at a loss what to do with him, but having waited till the steward of the Prince of La Catholica was stirring, who, in the absence of his Lord, exercised the supreme magisterial functions, and who, even when his highness was there, exercised the authority of "Viceroy

over him :'' one of them went to the baronial residence, and entreated the advice of the great man. Fortunately the English traveller had arrived the evening before, and being lodged with the steward, met the police officer in the hall, and enquired for Castagnello. On learning his situation, he immediately interceded in his behalf, and the steward too happy, as he alledged, to have it in his power to oblige an honored guest of his Prince, readily consented to be responsible for the prisoner, until he was in a condition to be removed from the town, in the hope that the petitioner would amply reward his obliging disposition. The officers were thus induced to leave Castagnello under charge of a doctor, whom the traveller had the charity to send to his assistance, although he refrained from visiting him, being told by the physician before he saw the patient, that the fever was in all probability contagious.

The disease, however, proved but of short duration, for on the third day Castagnello was able to leave his apartment, much

to the chagrin of the steward of the Prince of La Catholica, who had been led to hope, by the representations of the police officer, that he would die and give him no further trouble ; for the Englishman, on quitting the town, gave him a purse to defray any expences which the prisoner might occasion, and which the honest steward was desirous of appropriating entirely to himself.

The next best thing, therefore, that could happen in the opinion of this conscientious personage was that the prisoner should make his escape, knowing that he might safely trust to the power of his master to protect himself from the consequences of the responsibility which he had incurred to the police officers. In Sicily, as well as in many other places, the local magistrates wink at a great many of the inconveniences attending the administration of public justice, especially when it serves themselves to do so. Accordingly, when Castagnello was quite recovered, Signor Scampavia, the steward, that nothing might be wanting on his part, sent for him to the castle, and

having courteously condescended, in consideration of the culprit being a friend of the Mi Lordo, to request him to be seated, addressed him to the following effect:—

“It gives me great pleasure, Signor, to see you look so well. I was much afraid you would have died among us, which would have occasioned no small expence to his highness, the Prince, my master, as I should have been obliged to bury you at his cost and charge, for you know that here in Siculiana you are as destitute of kith and kin, as a dog or the wild boars in the chestnut woods of Mount Etna; and any trifle of money in your pocket would have gone of right to the worthy men who brought you here, unless it had pleased them to give part of it to the Capuchin friars in La Catholica to say mass for your soul. Honest men! I am sure they well deserve all you have, and much more if you had it to give, for if they had not consented to leave you, which they did most readily at my suggestion, you would have perished on the road, and the flies would have eaten the flesh from your

bones. But, thank heaven! you are now hale and hearty, and as able for a journey as any young fellow that ever made a good use of his limbs. I trust, however, that after all the kindness you have met with, you will not use them to run away from Siculiana, because that would be the most horrid ingratitude, as you cannot but know very well, that were you to do so, I have no men to send after you. At the same time, I think it is a great pity that so handsome a young fellow as you are should be doomed for life to the miserable prison-isle of Cape Pasero. Oh! it is the most terrible place in all the known world. I had once occasion to be there. I went of my own accord, Signor, when becalmed in a voyage from Gergente to Syracuse. Being becalmed, and having nothing to do, I visited the prison island. There I saw a dismal black castle—a black castle, mark that; and in the inside were some twenty felons with long beards, and bound hand and feet with fetters of iron. The devils in hell, I am sure,

are perfect beauties compared to them. Mercy on us ! what a life it must be to live all the days of the year with such companions, nay, not only all the days of the year, but all the years of one's life. I know not what I should do were I in your situation, Signor, but stone and lime would not hold me fast, stronger though they are than gratitude and every principle of honour; what, indeed, does it signify to a man to cherish either gratitude or honour, when, by so doing, he must take up his abode in the prison-isle of Cape Pasero, and die there, and go to hell afterwards; for he can have no hope of ever reaching the gates of Paradise when he has associated with the incarnated demons of the black castle of the prison-isle of Cape Pasero; and, if he once goes there, he can never hope to escape; for Signor, it is an island, which you know, Signor, is a rock surrounded by the waves of the sea, that dash against it night and day, and are never at rest. But if you go to the prison-isle, perhaps you think the Mi Lord

will obtain your pardon. Ah! Signor, if you knew as much of those English as I do, you would not trust a pinch of snuff to their fidelity. Poor wretches! are they not heretics? and what faith can you have in a heretic? To be sure, the Mi Lordo did leave these two dollars with me to give to you, and with them a sober man might travel from Siculiana to Palermo, where the Mi Lordo expects to be in a day or two; but were you, Signor Castagnello, to attempt that, I would account you an ungrateful monster, only fit to live with the heretical English, in that hell-upon-earth of their's, the great city of London, where such excellent beer is made, and every luxury in life abounds, and the most beautiful girls in the world, dressed like princesses, take the young men by the arms, and lead them into delicious gardens, more splendid than the palace of Morgiana, the fairy, but where, alas! there is not a single saint that can be depended on."

Castagnello perfectly understood the drift of this harrangue, and the same night, when

the moon rose, he departed from Siculiana, leaving the two dollars in the hands of the honest steward, as a pledge that he could not be such a monster of ingratitude as that discreet personage apprehended.

CHAPTER XXVI.



If ever you have look'd on better days,
If ever been where bells have knoll'd to church,
If ever sat at any good man's feast;
If ever from your eye-fids wiped a tear,
And know what 'tis to pity and be pitied,
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be.

WHEN Castagnello had descended from the hills on which the town of Siculiana is situated, he paused, in doubt which way to direct his steps. The fragrance of the orange gardens in the valley, came in the freshness of the west wind upon his senses; and the recollections of his past life, particularly of all that had preceded the evening of his departure from Naples, when the same delicious perfumes were breathed towards him as he passed along the road to Rome, himself then uncontaminated with any vice, rose in his mind in successive emotions of

pleasure and sadness, like the reflection of the moonlight on the Mediterranean, as seen through the boughs of the trees.

About two miles from the town, on the side of the road that leads to Gergente, there is a small niche, containing an image of the Virgin, to which passengers are in the practice of doing reverence, and on the steps before it, on which they are accustomed to kneel, the outcast sat down.

He thought of the high hopes he had once cherished, and sighed to think how harshly they had been all plucked and trodden. In that moment he threw his eyes upwards, and a cloud, the only one that then hovered in the whole expanse of the starry tranquillity of the air, came slowly over the ascending moon. He felt as if it were a type of his own destiny, and watched its progress till the planet was swallowed in the darkness of its bosom. In a few minutes the occultation began to lessen; the cloud melted away, and the beautiful orb again solemnly launched into the chrysaline abyss, floated alone in her sphere like

the spirit of a vestal rising towards heaven.

“Darkened and disgraced as I am,” said the convict with emotion, “may I not yet be destined to shine out?” and as he uttered these words, he rose, and turning round, prostrated himself before the image of the Virgin, and implored her assistance with great fervour.

Whether the virgin heard his prayer, we have never been in a situation to learn, but while he was kneeling, the sound of voices approaching startled his ear, and presently he discovered with alarm that they were those of the officers who had brought him from Sciacca. Fortunately, however, gentlemen of their profession are not much more addicted to religion than the other culprits of the law, and they not only passed the image of our blessed lady without reverence, but one of them gave a profane and contemptuous whistle when he saw her votary prostrate on the ground, but did not disturb his devotion.

They had delivered the two convicts

safely to the governor of the prison-isle and were returning home. The probability, therefore was, that had they been aware who the worshipper was, they would not have seized him, because it might have occasioned them to return with him to Cape Pasero, but they were not tempted either way. They passed on towards Siculiana as I have described, left it again early in the morning, and never troubled themselves to enquire whether the prisoner was dead or alive.

Castagnello rose immediately on their passing, hastened down the hill, and, urged by the impulse of the incident, went forward on the road to Girgento. At day-break he found himself near the precincts of that port, and observing three Maltese boats making for the harbour, he resolved to conceal himself till they reached the mole, and to mingle with the passengers at disembarkation, and pretend that he also had come in one of the boats from Malta.

This expedient was not only ingenious,

but the very best he could adopt ; for, being still in the uniform of the Grand Master's guard, it saved him a world of other subterfuges. Accordingly, when the passengers were put on shore, and their luggage ravenously taken possession of by the crowd of poor wretches who infest the mole of Gergente, and ply as porters between the harbour and the city, which is superbly situated on the top of a mountain, about four miles distant, Castagnello joined the loquacious throng as they proceeded, bag and baggage, to the custom-house, and readily obtained, for the customary fee, a passport among the rest to Palermo. Having no luggage, he walked on without delay to the city. The path was rugged and steep, but the sides were lined with magnificent rows of the American aloes in blossom, and he reached the locanda in the lower range of the town, in a state of calm and temperate feeling, produced by the beauty of the landscape and the freshness of the morning air. On entering the house he sent for the master to procure him something for breakfast. It

was still an early hour, but not having had any supper, his appetite was sharpened by want as well as by the length of his journey.

While the locandieré was absent, a young man who kept a small school in the neighbourhood, came in and offered himself as a Cicerone to conduct the captain to the ruins of Agregentum. It may easily be imagined that the captain was in no great humour for any such amusement, and indeed, he rudely repulsed the offer; but there was so much patient meekness in the look with which the poor young man regarded him, that it almost instantly softened his spirit, and he invited him to partake of his breakfast with materials for which the locandieré then entered. The gentle domine respectfully accepted the invitation, but requested leave to step home to acquaint the good woman with whom he lodged. We might here moralize, with great propriety, on the hollowness of appearances in the relative conditions of mankind, and assure the courteous reader of that never-before

mentioned truism, that the great are not so much to be envied as some honest folks imagine ; but a topic so original and curious would deserve more time to do it justice than our publisher will allow at this advanced period of the season, he being very anxious to have the book out in time, while the wintry mornings allow the fair and young leisure time to read ; and we ourselves being in great need of the stipulated price at which we engaged to finish this piece of work.

When Signor Salpano, the school-master left the locanda, the landlord said to Castagnello, " He is the best poet in all Sicily and an excellent creature, with a heart as tender as the dove's. There is not a god or goddess but he can make a song about, nay, for that, Signor Capitano, he could make a most divine one about yourself ; and he is such a clever improvisatoré, that a Mi Lordo who was here yesterday, told him that if he could speak English and carry his genius to London, he would make

more money in one winter than the revenues of the archbishop for a whole year."

Castagnello was convinced that this Mi Lordo could be no other than the generous Englishman who had expressed so much concern for himself; it was therefore with a feeling of intense pleasure, that he heard from the Cicerone, on his return, that the traveller had lodged in the Benedictine monastery, and that he had brought letters to the Archbishop, who could, no doubt, tell his name.

When breakfast was finished, Castagnello begged the schoolmaster to go to the convent and palace, and obtain for him all the information he could; and, being fatigued with his journey, he stretched himself on the only bed which the locanda afforded, and fell into a profound sleep, which may be enjoy till the return of Signor Salpano; while we, by way of episode, and in pleasant contrast to the gloomy incidents of this authentic history, relate some particulars in the life of the poetical domine.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower has blown to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

THE poor school-master believed that, as in the fabulous ages of antiquity, poets were still regarded as the most illustrious of mankind; and that kings and queens, princes and princesses, and all the members of the blood royal of Europe were ambitious to do them homage, and longed for opportunities to crown them with laurel wreaths, in the midst of their applauding people. His faith even went so far as to think that critics were held in abomination with the wise and good; and that, whenever they ventured so show their heads, they ran the risk of being pelted to death with stones. Signor Salpato was therefore scarcely more

anxious to obtain the means than a pretext to quit his school, that he might see the world, and receive at the hands of their Sicilian majesties, then in the bloom of youth and the spring of their eventful reign, those evergreen testimonies of merit which he was conscious of deserving.

He was a native of Rusi, a pleasant village in one of the romantic vallies through which the river Salso, the Himera of the antients, winds his desultory stream. His father was a barber, and not more distinguished for the suavity of his razor than the taste with which he embellished the most simple tidings, and it was supposed by many of his philosophical customers that the genius which the son afterwards displayed in extemporaneous compositions, both in verse and prose, was either derived from some hereditary impulse, or from the excitement which he experienced in listening to the old man's garrulous narratives. A few were of a different opinion, and thought his talent was original and peculiar to himself; but these were weak persons, for

every body now knows that there is no such thing as peculiar endowments. Nature, in fact, has nothing to do with the formation of the mind, according to the opinions of the most eminent metaphysicians of the present day, who maintain that the human being may be modified into any thing by education. In the particular case of Salpano nothing was ever determined, but many disputes took place on the subject in the barber's shop; and least my British readers doubt that such discussions were held in such a place, I beg leave to mention that those disputants were friars belonging to a neighbouring monastery, one of whom became the voluntary instructor of the bardling.

Father Ludivico had early discovered the natural intelligence of young Salpano, and thought that in time he might be formed into an excellent priest; but the bent of his genius was not ecclesiastical. The good friar, however, was induced from kindness for the boy, to continue that attention to the cultivation of his mind, which

he had commenced for the benefit of the church ; so that about the age of eighteen the future poet was an accomplished classical scholar, but as ignorant as such youths commonly are of modern practical knowledge. Being thus filled with the beautiful of antiquity, and his notions elevated far above the sphere of human cares and actions, he was sent to the city of Alicata, which stands at the mouth of his native river, and placed as an apprentice in the shop of one Doctor Epicaco, the brother of his tutor.

The Doctor was as testy as a wasp, but the gentle spirit of Salpano submitted to his spleen with the meekness of a holy martyr, and, for three years, endured his peevish effervescence without complaint, almost without repining. But the patient ass may be overloaded, and the docile camel driven too far. The resignation of Salpano was at length exhausted ; still he did not complain. He performed his embittered duties with his wonted punctuality, but he grew pale and thin, and his languid eyes sometimes over-

flowed with tears that he could not suppress. He was always solitary, but, instead of returning to his lodgings to feed his hopes with the romances of literary honour, it was observed, that when he shut the shop at sunset, he walked towards the sea shore, and sat, for hours together, on the rocks, looking mournfully at the waves that rose against them and were thrown back, and lost for ever in the multitudinous swellings the water.

One evening, after the irritable Epicaco had been rendered more than usually acrimonious, by the ill success of an experiment that he tried with one of his patients, and which occasioned immediate death when no danger was apprehended, his disconsolate apprentice was seen to walk with hasty and perturbed steps to the rock where he was accustomed to sit so often musing, and to stand there tossing his hands in a very frantic manner towards the heavens; but, as he was a shy and strange lad, nobody heeded this extravagance, and the

darkness soon concealed him from observation.

Next morning, the Doctor was surprised that he came not to the shop, and, recollecting that he had for some time appeared sickly, he thought that he must be ill, but on sending to enquire for him, was exceedingly exasperated to hear he had not been at home all night. Father Ludivico was no less surprised, when, much about the same time, he saw his unhappy pupil enter his cell and burst into tears.

What took place need not be related; the result, however, was, that the Friar wrote an angry letter to the Doctor, and Salpano, in the course of a few days after, departed for Girgente, where, under the patronage of "a little round fat oily man of God," a cousin to Father Ludivico, and who was much in the good graces of Signora Camerara, the housekeeper of the Archbishop, he undertook to teach the young idea how to shoot, a profession consecrated by the example of Socrates and Plato.

In this situation he had been about three years, during which his poetical talents had been occasionally unfolded; and having made himself acquainted with the history and local antiquities, he had accumulated a little money by acting as Cicerone to strangers visiting the ruins of Agrigentum.

The self-denial with which he had saved this money, would have beggared the misery of an Elwes, but it was cheered with most delightful vistas of fancy, and every dollar that he added to his stock seemed, to his fond enthusiasm, as the bright finger of a cherub beckoning on to immortality. His object was to gather a sum sufficient to enable him to study in the university of Palermo, until he found an opportunity of reciting some of his poetry before the Viceroy, who would, no doubt, send him to the Court of Naples, as worthy to partake the liberality of their Majesties who were, as he understood, not only the greatest sovereigns, but the most munificent patrons of literature then in the known world.

On counting his savings, after adding to it the present which he had received from the Englishman, he thought it enough for all his purposes, and was standing at the door of his school, ruminating on the brilliant destiny awaiting him when Castagnello passed towards the Locanda.

The Englishman being the only traveller that he had yet met with who appeared to take any interest in his fate, it was not altogether on Castagnello's account that he went with renovated cheerfulness to enquire his name and address in Palermo. In ascending the steep lanes which lead to that high ridge of the city, where the Benedictine monastery and the palace of the Archbishop are situated, his imagination was busy forming a project which could not fail to realize all his golden dreams of fame and fortune. It was nothing less than to give up his school, and offer his services as a valet to Castagnello, with whose manners and appearance he was much prepossessed, thinking that, by these means, he would obtain some way of distinguishing himself

without impairing the little fund of his savings. Accordingly, when he had procured the requisite information, he hastened back to the locanda, and Castagnello awaking as he entered, looked out and enquired what success had attended his mission. But I must leave the reader himself to imagine what were the feelings of the outcast on hearing that the traveller was no other than the Earl of Wildwaste, his brother. It will be recollected that the arrogance of the Austrians had inspired him with something like a prejudice against this relation, but the civility which had been so spontaneously bestowed by his lordship wiped it away, and he now felt towards him a sentiment of gratitude that only required time and experience to be concentrated into brotherly love.

When the transport with which he heard the information had subsided, the simple-hearted Salpano meekly submitted to him the prudent project which he had so judiciously formed, but Castagnello declared, with unfeigned fervour, that his news were

equivalent to a great stroke of good fortune, and that so far from consenting to take him to Palermo in any menial capacity, he should accompany him as his friend.

This was an assurance of success so far beyond the most sanguine hopes of the modest poet, that he could scarcely credit his ears, and without taking time to make any answer to the outcast, he ran to his school where his pupils had by this time assembled, and addressing them in a rapsody of nonsense and tenderness, that alternately shook them with laughter and melted their young hearts with tears, he bade them farewell for ever with a triumphant flourish of his hand, and rushed, sobbing like an artless child, into the street.

Preparations for immediately proceeding to Palermo were ordered by Castagnello ; and while the exulting schoolmaster was running here and there in great glee, shaking hands and talking fast with every body he knew, a letica was brought to the door of the Locanda.

It has been remarked by many travellers

that the inhabitants of the Italian regions do honour to their great men in a better taste than any other people, and the departure of Signor Salpano, the schoolmaster, for the capital, afforded a fine example of this pre-eminence. Of all his scholars, not one was seen in the streets, as the letica ascended the hill to the gate which opens on the road to Palermo. But beyond the walls lining the road which winds down into the valley, they were all assembled with all their kindred, bearing green boughs in their hands, which as the mules came merrily shaking their bells, they waved over the letica, shouting, Long life to our poet, Salpano—Glory and riches—adieu, adieu.

The warm-hearted enthusiast was quite overcome by the eclat of his departure, and in spite of all the refulgent visions that floated in his fancy, he was dissolved with tenderness and sorrow. Even Castagnello, who was at first much inclined to laugh at this mixture of burlesque and affection, was greatly moved. He remembered the high anticipations of his own departure from home;

a keener sentiment of compassion was awakened for his companion than his bosom had ever before enjoyed, and the artless manners of Salpango were calculated to convert this feeling into a more permanent regard. Thus an incident, in itself exceedingly ludicrous, gave him the first sense of pure and virtuous emotions; but it often happens that things of the deepest consequence to our character, arise in circumstances which from their own nature seem the least likely to produce any permanent impression.

END OF VOL. I.

